UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly
FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION
Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
34th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 10 November 1992
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 34th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KRENKEL (Austria)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 96: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS

(a) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

(b) QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

(c) HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/47/SR.34
18 November 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

/...

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 96: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (A/47/91-S/23585, A/47/131, A/47/178, A/47/280, A/47/296, A/47/351-S/24357, A/47/365, A/47/391, A/47/420-S/24519, A/47/455-S/24571 and A/47/638-S/24772)

(a) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (A/47/12 and Add.1)

(b) QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS (A/47/364 and 529 and Corr.1)

(c) HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (A/47/352, 420, 455 and 540)

1. Mrs. OGATA (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) introducing the item, said that the two main functions of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were to provide international protection to refugees and seek durable solutions to their problems. International protection could be provided only through and in cooperation with Governments. The Office must be fully recognized as acting on behalf of the international community and representing non-political, humanitarian concerns.

2. The past year had been a turbulent one. Three million refugees had been forced into exile, while a million and a half had returned home. World wide, the number of refugees had continued to increase inexorably, reaching no fewer than 18 million. As the lead agency in the former Yugoslavia, UNHCR had been striving to provide humanitarian assistance to some 3 million refugees and displaced persons. It had also been grappling with new and massive flows of refugees. In Kenya, their number exceeded 420,000 mainly from the disaster in Somalia and, to a lesser extent, Ethiopia. The number of refugees from Mozambique had increased further, reaching 1.5 million amid the worst African drought in recent memory. UNHCR had also been confronted with the arrival of a quarter of a million refugees fleeing from Myanmar into poverty-stricken Bangladesh.

3. Simultaneously, the Office was faced with the demands of massive repatriation movements to Afghanistan, Cambodia, Iraq, Ethiopia, Angola and South Africa. Never had the experience of UNHCR in providing protection and assistance to refugees and returnees been so intensely relevant and so extensively tested. Unprecedented demands on the Office had been matched by unprecedented financial support. She noted with appreciation that, during the year, more than $900 million had been received from Governments in response to total needs exceeding $1 billion for the first time in history.

/...

(Mrs. Ogata)

4. The scale and complexity of the humanitarian crisis confronting the world reflected the current uncertainty and instability. Resurgent nationalism, coupled with the serious economic and social consequences of the collapse of the old world order, had led to a proliferation of conflicts. The Office faced a number of fundamental challenges that went to the very heart of its mandate. Given its experience, demonstrated capacity to innovate and the indispensable support of Governments, UNHCR would continue to adapt to new challenges while preserving the established principles of international protection. In the radically changed international environment, new opportunities and imperatives had emerged, not only for responding to refugee situations, but also for preventing and resolving them in the countries from which the refugees came. The past 12 months had tested the Office's three-pronged strategy, consisting in prevention, preparedness and solutions.

5. Preventive action must tackle the root causes of refugee flows, which were inextricably linked to political conflicts and violations of human rights. Consequently, the Office had sought to enhance its cooperation with the human rights machinery of the United Nations and other relevant organizations. With the cooperation of the Governments concerned, UNHCR had greatly stepped up preventive activities in Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

6. Prevention, however, also meant direct engagement in situations of acute crisis or open conflict. The Office had extended protection and assistance to internally displaced persons and other victims of conflict in an effort to limit the impetus to flight. In the former Yugoslavia, for instance, the Office's presence in the middle of a conflict aimed at uprooting people had confronted UNHCR with a real dilemma. It was unclear to what extent the Office could persuade people to remain where they were in order to prevent displacement and "ethnic cleansing" without exposing them to danger. Even in such conditions of extreme risk, however, international presence made a difference. Prevention was hands-on action, dependent on direct presence and linked to emergency response and the search for solutions.

7. Preventive activities could help to contain human catastrophe by creating the time and space for the political process to take place. Prevention, however, must also be seen in the broader context of questions to be dealt with by the United Nations system, such as dealing with massive violations of human rights or striking the right balance so that sanctions served as a political tool, but did not become a lethal weapon against the weak.

8. with regard to preparedness, she had sought over the past year, to strengthen further the capacity of UNHCR to respond to emergencies by setting up five emergency teams, increasing training and arranging for stockpiles of relief goods and rapid deployment of staff. At the same time, once an emergency phase was completed and refugees were reintegrated into their communities, the Office should rapidly transfer its activities to other appropriate organizations. After a little more than a year in northern Iraq,

/...

(Mrs. Ogata)

during which UNHCR had assisted some 1.7 million refugees and displaced persons, the Office had withdrawn from the area and redeployed its staff of some 180 persons to other emergency areas. Thus, UNHCR must have the capacity both to respond effectively and to withdraw rapidly, and should not provide regular, ongoing programmes.

9. As for finding solutions - the third aspect of the strategy - large numbers of refugees were returning to countries laid waste by war. The fragility of the situations in Cambodia, Afghanistan, Angola, the Horn of Africa and South Africa demonstrated the precarious nature of voluntary return. Repatriation, therefore, called for a range of closely related responses to protect and assist returnees until they were reintegrated.

10. The complex nature of refugee situations required a concerted, multifaceted response from the international community. For that reason, the Office had been forging increasingly close operational partnerships with other agencies. In the Horn of Africa, it had sought to develop innovative inter-agency approaches to problems that went beyond the mandate of any one organization. The Cambodian operation demonstrated a successful system-wide framework for cooperation which ensured coherent political and humanitarian endeavours as well as reintegration programmes leading to longer-term rehabilitation.

11. UNHCR welcomed the establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and its collaboration with that Department was developing well. Coordination, however, could not replace the individual or collective capacity of the agencies and must be carefully focused to enhance the comparative advantages and expertise of individual agencies. In a world where persecution and strife were an everyday reality, protection through asylum was all the more important to humanitarian work. Never before had the unique mandate of the Office to provide protection to those fleeing persecution been so severely tested and never before had UNHCR so greatly needed the support of the international community.

12. Mr. ELIASSON (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs), introducing the reports of the Secretary-General on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa (A/47/529) and on humanitarian assistance to victims of natural disasters and similar emergency situations (A/47/540), said that the creation of a new Department of Humanitarian Affairs had been justified by the need for new instruments to deal with ever more numerous, complex and urgent humanitarian emergencies.

13. Demographic pressures interacting with poverty and environmental degradation, placing an intolerable strain on nations' already limited capacity to meet basic human needs, would make both internal and international migration increasingly common. In environmental crises, the difficulty of drawing a distinction between man-made and natural disasters called for consistent and comprehensive action vis-à-vis the entire affected population,

(Mr. Eliasson)

be they refugees, internally displaced people or victims of drought or conflicts. The problem of social and economic imbalances between people in camps, host communities and areas of origin should be addressed. Effective action called for an integrated approach.

14. While full use must be made of all available assets in the United Nations system to respond to emergencies, it must be recognized that the United Nations could not handle and solve all problems alone. There must be a pooling of resources and a division of labour among the United Nations, Governments, other international and regional organizations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the non-governmental community, failing which there was a risk of disappointment with the United Nations and ultimately its Member States. Coordination and cooperation, a question addressed by the Secretary-General in his report on humanitarian emergency assistance (A/47/595), should further strengthen the capacity of the international community to respond to humanitarian crises.

15. Document A/47/529, which focused on integrated relief, rehabilitation and development and on practical steps to address the root causes of displacement, prompted two comments. First, because of the generosity of African countries in receiving refugees despite their own difficulties, the international community, together with the countries concerned, must contemplate measures to assist local populations, in promoting integration or temporary self-reliance. Second, requirements for assistance to the displaced persons were often more acute and comprehensive after a civil war than during the conflict. Such was the case, for example, in Mozambique, where the expected movement of over 3 million people in the next year, at a time of unprecedented drought, required huge efforts by all parties concerned.

16. A recent escalation in the fighting in Liberia would exacerbate the situation of refugees, returnees and displaced persons. The United Nations country team in Monrovia had assessed emergency requirements, and Governments were urged to respond immediately to the Organization's urgent appeal.

17. The difficulties in the Horn of Africa, especially Eritrea, remained complex and daunting. Donors' pledges in response to the inter-agency appeal still fell short of total requirements by more than $60 million. The non-food sector was the most seriously underfunded. The gap between commitment and delivery of food aid had also created serious pipeline problems. The international community was urged to respond immediately to the appeal.

18. Three concrete issues raised in document A/47/540 deserved special mention. The first was the question of access to victims in acute crises. With the increasing role of humanitarian action, there had been growing acceptance of the principle of access in international and internal conflict situations, while taking into account the basic principles related to sovereignty and consent, as well as the impartiality and neutrality of United Nations relief operations. The second matter concerned relief corridors in

/...

(Mr. Eliasson)

emergency zones. Recent developments had demonstrated the importance but also the complexity of establishing and using such corridors. On the basis of that experience, there was a need to consider more specific guidelines for effective access to people in need, as well as measures for improved protection of humanitarian relief workers in conflicts. Thirdly, the proposed compilation of an international list of persons and bodies with specific knowledge of emergency assistance might usefully be preceded by the establishment of an informal United Nations clearing-house mechanism for that purpose. A pragmatic approach was needed, and his Department, especially its Geneva branch, could be helpful in that regard, if given the task and the tools needed.

19. Many of the issues on the Committee's agenda could be discussed in greater depth within the context of its consideration of the question relating to a new international humanitarian order; such issues could include the evolution of international humanitarian law, particularly in regard to the security of relief workers or mass expulsions. The experience of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs could help the international community to strengthen the foundation on which to build assistance in emergencies in the years to come, in close cooperation with all partners in that humanitarian venture. In concluding, he thanked the Committee for its initiative in establishing a fund for United Nations relief efforts for Somalia.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly
FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION
Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
35th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 11 November 1992
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 35th MEETING

Chairman:	Mr. KRENKEL	(Austria)
later:	Mr. DEKANY (Vice-Chairman)	(Hungary)
later:	Mr. KRENKEL (Chairman)	(Austria)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 96: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

(b) QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

(c) HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS

AGENDA ITEM 94: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 97: HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS (continued)

(b) HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS, INCLUDING ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/47/SR.35
4 December 1992
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

/...

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 96: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

(b) QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

(c) HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (A/47/12 and Add.1, A/47/91-S/23585, A/47/131, A/47/178, A/47/280, A/47/296, A/47/351-S/24357, A/47/352, A/47/364, A/47/365, A/47/391, A/47/420-S/24519, A/47/455-S/24571, A/47/529 and Corr.1, A/47/540, A/47/564 and A/47/638-S/24772)

1. Mr. RICHARDSON (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Community, said that there were 18 million refugees world wide and a comparable number of persons displaced in their own countries in urgent need of assistance from the international community. The member States of the European Community accordingly welcomed the appointment by the Secretary-General of a representative to examine the problems of displaced persons.

2. In Europe, in the former Yugoslavia, more than 3 million people had been forced to leave their homes as a result of the hostilities and the abhorrent practice of ethnic cleansing, which the European Community condemned unreservedly. The work done by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and her staff (UNHCR) in the field to coordinate United Nations activities was highly commendable, as were the efforts of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), to which the member States of the European Community were the main contributors.

3. The European Community had helped to alleviate the suffering by contributing almost $187 million and providing food, logistical support and staff. It had also participated in the airlift to Sarajevo and helped UNHCR and the local authorities to prepare for the winter. Although the European Community had accepted more than 320,000 refugees, it considered that most of the people who had had to leave their homes should be given relief as close as possible to their places of origin. The European Community would continue to provide full support and assistance to UNHCR in the former Yugoslavia.

4. In Africa, there were now 6 million refugees, or about one third of the world's total. The scale of the problem in the Horn of Africa was clearly beyond the scope of any one agency. The International Committee of the Red Cross and other non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies providing assistance there under the direction of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs were accomplishing an exceptional task. Elsewhere in Africa, the appalling drought had exacerbated the difficulties of many displaced persons. The European Community had responded swiftly and

/...

(Mr. Richardson, United Kingdom)

generously to the United Nations humanitarian programmes in Africa and was ready to continue its cooperation.

5. Despite the many emergencies to which it had had to respond, UNHCR had been able to continue to implement voluntary repatriation programmes with the crucial cooperation of UNDP, UNICEF and other development assistance agencies. For example, the international reintegration programme for Vietnamese returnees, formulated on the initiative of the European Community, provided for a combination of returnee aid and development assistance with a view to successful resettlement.

6. In Cambodia, some 150,000 refugees had been repatriated through the skill and imagination of UNHCR. Voluntary repatriation had also begun for the 250,000 refugees from Myanmar now in Bangladesh, but, unfortunately, the Myanmar authorities refused access to United Nations agencies wanting to monitor the return process.

7. Some 1.8 million Iraqi refugees, mostly Kurds, who had been in Iran and Turkey, had returned to their country and, through the efforts of UNHCR and the success of its winterization programme, had been able to rebuild their homes. A large number of Afghan refugees who had been in Iran and Pakistan had also returned to their country. Regrettably, the recent hostilities in Kabul had resulted in a new wave of displaced persons.

8. The UNHCR budget, to which the European Community and its member States had always provided considerable support, had been in excess of $1 billion in 1992. In that context, it should be noted that in table 3 of the High Commissioner's report to the General Assembly (A/47/12), the 1991 total under the heading "Intergovernmental organizations" should be $123,434,409. That amount had been entirely contributed by the European Community and the report should reflect that fact. In 1992, in addition to food aid, logistical support and seconded staff, the European Community had provided more than 40 per cent of UNHCR's total budget. The European Community would continue to provide major financial support to UNHCR and urged all Governments to do likewise.

9. The member States of the European Community were deeply concerned at the ever-increasing number of incidents that endangered the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the security of UNHCR staff. The States concerned should take all necessary security measures to prevent such incidents from occurring.

10. Human rights violations, persecution, foreign invasion and internal conflict were the main reasons why people felt forced to flee their homes. Eliminating them was therefore fundamental for preventing and solving refugee problems, since voluntary repatriation could only succeed if the country of origin provided the necessary conditions for those returning to be reintegrated fully into their society.

/...

(Mr. Richardson, United Kingdom)

11. The UNHCR Executive Committee's Subcommittee of the Whole on International Protection had held a series of meetings during the year. The European Community welcomed the conclusions of the Working Group on the role of UNHCR in the country of origin, temporary and in-country protection, group determination and safety zones.

12. The European Community and its member States remained committed to their obligations under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. There was a growing number of manifestly unfounded asylum requests and persons who had entered the European Community irregularly, ignoring opportunities for protection closer to home. That situation caused delays in the processing of applications for those who genuinely needed the protection of member States and diverted resources which might otherwise be used to address the root causes of refugee flows. Asylum remained an essential option in responding to refugee problems, but it was essential to distinguish between refugees and economic migrants.

13. The international community must redouble its efforts, both nationally and through agencies such as UNHCR, to alleviate the suffering of refugees and to end the situations causing them.

14. Mr. DJIMRANGAR (Chad) said that more than 18 million refugees world wide lived in appalling conditions because of situations caused by armed conflict, extremist tensions and massive human rights violations. The international economic situation, environmental degradation and natural disasters aggravated the situation.

15. In order to address the problems of refugees, UNHCR must have available the required resources to meet increasing demands for aid. Member States must strengthen humanitarian law. The United Nations system, along with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and relevant non-governmental organizations, must take coordinated steps to prevent the situations forcing people to leave and to promote voluntary repatriation.

16. Chad supported the new UNHCR strategy that focused on improving response capacity, using every opportunity for voluntary repatriation, and applying preventive measures.

17. In the case of Chad, 449,280 refugees had returned to the country in 1991 and 12,000 more had registered for voluntary return in 1992 and 1993. Chad was grateful to UNHCR for its efforts to repatriate and resettle those refugees in their regions of origin, and thanked donors for their financial and material support.

18. In Chad, the years of war and dictatorship had resulted in a massive exodus to neighbouring countries. Due to the democratization process begun in December 1990, some 900,000 refugees had returned voluntarily. A large number of them, however, had not been registered as refugees in their countries of refuge; consequently, they were not receiving UNHCR resettlement assistance.

/...

(Mr. Djimrangar, Chad)

They, like internally displaced persons, were living in absolute poverty, and the Government of Chad had serious difficulties in meeting their needs for shelter, food and medical care.

19. His delegation reiterated its appeal made on 5 October before the General Assembly for the agencies of the United Nations system and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to provide the assistance required to the Government of Chad to enable it to implement its resettlement programme for voluntary returnees and displaced persons.

20. Chad believed that humanitarian assistance to refugees should be accompanied by measures to attack the root causes of that evil and to re-establish and consolidate peace.

21. Mr. Dekany (Hungary), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

22. Ms. LAFONTANT-MANKARIOUS (United States of America) said that, one year earlier, the Executive Committee of UNHCR had endorsed the High Commissioner's plan to improve the emergency response capacity of the Office, which included greater flexibility and adequacy of funding, deployment of qualified and trained staff and stockpiling of critical material assistance. Shortly after those measures had been endorsed, emergency situations had arisen exceeding the normal operating capacity of all humanitarian agencies.

23. UNHCR had been able to make a satisfactory response to the refugee crises in the former Yugoslavia, the Horn of Africa and northern Iraq and had coordinated its activities effectively with private agencies, ICRC and other international organizations. The experience gained through those crises must be incorporated into its future plans.

24. UNHCR had also played an important role in providing assistance to refugees from Myanmar in Bangladesh and refugees from Bhutan in Nepal, demonstrating its improved capacity to respond to emergencies.

25. The possibilities for providing protection to refugees had been demonstrated through the UNHCR response to the crisis in the republics of the former Yugoslavia and in northern Iraq. It was likely that the international community would continue to request UNHCR to act in situations of that nature.

26. The United States welcomed the Working Group's Note on International Protection, which had made an important contribution to the international discussion of refugee protection. At the same time, Member States must recognize the constraints on personnel, financing and, perhaps, mandate that would be brought about by the additional responsibilities discussed in the Note. Her delegation encouraged the High Commissioner to continue to develop the concepts outlined in that document, in close cooperation with UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and WHO and other agencies concerned with humanitarian affairs.

/...

(Ms. Lafontant-Mankarious, United States)

27. The United States welcomed the use of UNHCR General Programme funds for voluntary repatriation activities, especially in Angola, Afghanistan and Cambodia. The United States had contributed $38 million to those and other important repatriation programmes.

28. Refugee women and children required special assistance. The United Nations and humanitarian agencies participating in refugee assistance programmes should follow the example of UNHCR and develop policies and guidelines to target their programmes to a beneficiary population largely composed of refugee women and children. It was hoped that the protection of those groups would soon become a significant concern of UNHCR field offices, although unfortunately, some staff showed little interest in that issue. Efforts should continue in order to focus attention of UNHCR staff on the needs of beneficiaries from the planning stage through implementation. Programming errors must be avoided and the relationship between programme planning and the needs and capacities of women and children, constituting the huge majority of refugees, must be strengthened.

29. Officers responsible for the protection of women from sexual abuse must expand beyond their traditional focus and address the question of physical protection. Refugee protection officers should be assigned to the field. The United States welcomed the efforts by UNHCR to improve programming and to incorporate the needs of refugee women and children, and would assist in that effort with financial contributions.

30. With regard to the proposal for cross-mandate approaches to humanitarian emergencies, the United States fully supported the coordinating efforts of the High Commissioner, which were the only way in which the international community could make optimum use of the resources at its disposal to address the tremendous humanitarian problems that it faced.

31. Mr. ANSARI (Pakistan) said that the global refugee population continued to soar and that it was ironical that the countries of asylum were developing countries whose economies could hardly absorb the burden which the refugees represented. While new and urgent refugee situations had become the focus of global attention, long-standing refugee situations, such as that of the Afghan refugees in Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, continued to require the attention of UNHCR and the international community.

32. Innovative and forward-looking strategies were needed, such as the three-pronged strategy adopted by UNHCR, to address refugee situations resulting from new and complex global problems. He was glad to note that the emergency preparedness and response capacity of UNHCR had been improved. His delegation was of the view that voluntary repatriation should remain the preferred durable solution to the refugee situation and, until such time as that became possible, refugees should be given protection. The reintegration of refugees into their societies needed to be rooted in national development and reconciliation.

/...

(Mr. Ansari, Pakistan)

33. The United Nations had played a commendable role in the peace process and in the establishment of an interim Government in Afghanistan. It was important for the Organization to continue to play an active part in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of that battle-scarred land. Despite the voluntary repatriation of a considerable number of Afghans, many of them still remained in Pakistan. Pakistan continued to provide sustenance to them, despite its own economic limitations. His delegation was deeply concerned at the tapering off of financial assistance from international agencies and donors. If contributions continued to dwindle at the current rate, the facilities which Pakistan extended to the Afghan refugees would be severely disrupted. The decline in assistance was particularly evident in food supplies and resources to meet the cost of transportation, storage and handling of relief goods.

34. It was regrettable that the appeal made by the Secretary-General in June 1992 for $180 million to meet the needs of the voluntary repatriation programme and immediate humanitarian needs had had a lukewarm response and that so far only one third of that amount had been pledged. It was important for the international community to undertake a coordinated effort to ensure that the refugees in Pakistan continued to be looked after and that arrangements were made to facilitate their voluntary return and rehabilitation in Afghanistan.

35. While reviewing its aid programmes, it was important that UNHCR should keep its commitments in view and be realistic. In that regard, he wished to draw the Committee's attention to the 1988 Agreement between UNHCR and Pakistan, under which UNHCR was committed to continue, as required, to extend its assistance to Afghan refugees pending their voluntary return to their homeland. The presence of the Afghan refugees and their livestock in the border areas of Pakistan for about 14 years had caused serious environmental degradation which in some areas might be irreversible. The donors should give urgent attention to that situation. Pakistan would continue to do all within its power to assist the Afghan refugees still in its territory and to facilitate their voluntary repatriation.

36. Pakistan believed that an end should be put to Serbian aggression and that the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina should be restored so that the helpless refugees could return to their homeland in safety. It urged the establishment of an international tribunal to prosecute those responsible for the war crimes committed by the Serbian forces, including the genocidal acts of ethnic cleansing. He noted the heavy responsibility of UNHCR and the way in which the agency had responded to the situation, in close cooperation with UNICEF, WHO, ICRC and the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR).

37. With regard to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, it should be recalled that that instrument had been based on events occurring prior to 1951 in Europe. Despite the progress made in the 1967 Protocol, that instrument had failed to rectify the Western bias that the notion of a

/...

(Mr. Ansari, Pakistan)

well-founded fear of persecution should be based only on deprivation of civil and political rights. That standard provided insufficient ground for granting asylum when the life or freedom of an asylum-seeker was endangered by one of the broader causes of flight recognized by the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa adopted by the Organization of African Unity, the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees adopted by the Organization of American States, and even the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The new instruments and rules adopted by certain developed countries aroused the fear that there might be discrimination between applicants on the basis of their origin. It might be interesting to compare the number of applications for asylum submitted to the developed countries, according to the country of origin of the applicants, and number of the applications accepted by the receiving countries, again according to country of origin. It might also be interesting to make a comparative evaluation of the Dublin Convention and Schengen Agreement, adopted by the European Community, and the 1951 Convention, to ensure that internationally accepted provisions were not being derogated from in practice.

38. Pakistan fully supported the humanitarian endeavours of UNHCR to find durable solutions to the various refugee situations and to provide sustenance and protection to refugees around the world.

39. Mr. KOROMA (Sierra Leone) said that, apart from the immense suffering and personal tragedy inherent in the situation of refugees, it had taken its toll on the limited resources and also on the socio-economic efforts of the developing countries.

40. Since Sierra Leone had opened its towns, villages and homes to over 200,000 Liberians who had escaped the agony of a civil war and had allowed its territory to be used as a base for the peace-keeping operation in Liberia, the leader of one of the factions in the Liberian conflict had infiltrated many of his fighters into Sierra Leone as refugees and had launched an armed insurrection in various parts of the country. As a result, thousands of Sierra Leoneans had lost their lives and hundreds of thousands had become internal refugees. Moreover, tremendous social and ecological depredations had been caused, including the destruction of schools and the burning down of hospitals and clinics, in those areas in which the rebel forces operated. The rebel forces had used narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances to force the induction of young men into their ranks; in order to avoid that, a sizeable number of students had become refugees. Notwithstanding that situation, Sierra Leone had continued to provide support to the large number of Liberian refugees who remained in the country.

41. The Government of Sierra Leone had adopted definitive measures that would allow the refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes as soon as peace returned to the affected areas. In that connection, it had established a National Rehabilitation Committee. He was grateful for the efforts made by various agencies, in particular UNHCR and ICRC, to support the nationals of

(Mr. Koroma, Sierra Leone)

Sierra Leone who had sought refuge in Guinea and those who had been able to return to the country. His delegation urged UNHCR and the other relevant agencies to develop their humanitarian operations and make them more effective.

42. The events in Somalia and Bosnia and Herzegovina had revealed a new dimension to the problem of humanitarian and emergency assistance. In both situations, operations had been carried out in areas where there was no effective control by governmental authorities. The Sierra Leone delegation was of the view that, in situations where sanctions were imposed, exceptions must be made for humanitarian assistance, especially to those most at risk, primarily women and children.

43. With regard to the 1951 Convention, his delegation believed that the notion of international protection and the principles of asylum and non-refoulement must be preserved. He welcomed the increasing role of humanitarian action in international situations and cases of armed conflict. Nevertheless, such intervention must not take place on a selective basis or serve as a pretext for interference in internal affairs prompted by narrow national or regional interests. The principle of national sovereignty must always be borne in mind.

44. Mr. GARRETON (Chile) said that the refugee issue was no longer a concern of specific regions, but a global concern. Accordingly, humanitarian action should be considered from the point of view of a set of variables which made up the concept of international peace and stability.

45. In the first place, there was a need to enhance UNHCR capacity to respond to emergency situations. The strengthening of cooperation between agencies, donor countries and non-governmental organizations was an essential element in that regard. The UNHCR response to such situations was closely linked to the prevailing conditions of security; for that reason, his delegation deemed it appropriate to consider the linkages which could develop between UNHCR activities and United Nations peace-keeping operations.

46. With regard to the pursuit of durable solutions, he drew attention to voluntary repatriation, which could, however, lead to fragile situations if refugees were compelled to return prematurely under less than ideal security conditions.

47. With reference to preventing the circumstances which caused refugee flows, he noted, in particular, such variables as ethnic or religious intolerance, extreme nationalism and the persistence of grave human rights violations. That made it necessary, as a preventive measure, to strengthen coordination between UNHCR and United Nations human rights bodies.

48. Another aspect was the strengthening of international protection. Efforts to establish efficient and fair procedures for the timely recognition

/...

(Mr. Garreton, Chile)

of refugee status and the principles protecting it, such as non-refoulement and non-discrimination, should be encouraged. Chile was especially interested in the debate on those issues which was taking place within UNHCR, as well as the situation of persons who did not meet the requirements of the 1951 Convention, the criteria for the cessation of refugee status and the determination of a safe haven.

49. He urged the promotion of cooperation between Governments, the United Nations and the public. That was of particular significance for the fight against racism and xenophobia. His delegation believed that the time had come to carry out a public information campaign to increase support for the humanitarian principles and values on which UNHCR was based.

50. With regard to the financial aspects, he recalled that, while Chile was not a donor country, any contributions would help to maintain the technical capability of UNHCR to respond to emergencies and to carry out other priority programmes.

51. Mr. Krenkel (Austria) resumed the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 94: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (continued) (A/C.3/47/L.24)

52. The CHAIRMAN said that draft resolution A/C.3/47/L.24, entitled "Violence against women migrant workers", had no programme budget implications and that, at the time of the introduction of the draft resolution, Australia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Malaysia, Mexico and Uganda had announced that they had joined the list of sponsors. He drew attention to the amendments proposed at the thirty-second meeting of the Committee.

53. Mrs. LIMJUCO (Philippines) said that, following consultations, it had been decided that paragraph 3 of the draft resolution should remain unchanged and that the first line of paragraph 4 should read as follows: "Calls upon relevant bodies and specialized agencies of the United Nations".

54. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objections, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt draft resolution A/C.3/47/L.24, as orally revised, without a vote.

55. Draft resolution A/C.3/47/L.24 was adopted.

56. Mrs. KHAPARDE (India) said that while her delegation had joined the consensus, it believed that there was an undue emphasis in the draft resolution on the duty of the sending countries to protect and promote the interests of their citizens who sought employment in other countries. It should be recognized that migrant workers played an essential role in the development of the receiving countries, and it was only natural that workers should emigrate to those countries because of financial incentives. It was, therefore, incumbent upon the receiving countries to ensure that migrant workers were not subjected to violence and harassment.

/...

AGENDA ITEM 97: HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS (continued)

(b) HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS, INCLUDING ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS (A/47/544; A/C.3/47/5 and A/C.3/47/L.20/Rev.1)

57. Mr. JONAH (Under-Secretary-General of Political Affairs) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the request to the United Nations to observe the referendum process in Eritrea (A/47/544). The issue under consideration had a long history in the United Nations and a peaceful solution was important for the peace and stability of the countries of the Horn of Africa. For that reason, the Secretary-General had acceded to the request by the Government of Ethiopia and several Member States for his assistance in that difficult process. The events of 1991 could have been resolved by the immediate independence of Eritrea, but the Eritreans had preferred to follow the path of legality, and thus had decided to hold a referendum with the assistance of the United Nations. Since the participation of the United Nations in that process would entail financial implications, it was necessary to obtain the approval of the General Assembly. It was to be hoped that an early decision could be taken on the matter because, as the referendum was scheduled to be held in 1993, it was necessary to begin preparations for it.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
36th meeting
held on
Thursday, 12 November 1992
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 36th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. DEKANY (Vice-Chairman) (Hungary)

later: Mr. KRENKEL (Chairman) (Austria)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 96: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (continued)

(b) QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS (continued)

(c) HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued)

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/47/SR.36
20 November 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

/...

In the absence of Mr. Krenkel (Austria), Mr. Dekany (Hungary), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 96: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued) (A/47/131, 178, 280, 296, A/47/351-S/24357, A/47/364, 365, 391, 564, 569 and A/47/638-S/24772)

(a) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (continued) (A/47/12 and Add.1)

(b) QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS (continued) (A/47/91-S/23585, A/47/529 and Corr.1)

(c) HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued) (A/47/352, A/47/420-S/24519, A/47/455-S/24571 and A/47/540)

1. Mr. SCHATZER (Observer, International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that there seemed to be an ever-increasing gap between the ability of the multilateral system to perceive the complexity of the real causes of humanitarian emergencies and its ability to cope with the consequences. Many humanitarian organizations were facing major new challenges. Rehabilitation needed to be an integral part of strategic planning to address emergencies. Development agencies had become increasingly involved in the early stages of operations and contributed to both prevention and remedial action. For those reasons, IOM had decided to seek closer cooperation with the United Nations system and was looking to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs for multilateral leadership. Solutions for a number of ongoing emergencies were on the horizon and might actually materialize if the international community succeeded in rethinking its approach.

2. The mechanisms being developed by the Department, such as joint assessment missions and appeals, were a beginning. The unified approach to joint appeals should be strengthened in order to make them useful to both donors and executing agencies. That applied to assessment and formulation as well as follow-up and monitoring. There was an urgent need for enhanced coordination. IOM had outlined a plan to facilitate return. While the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had the primary responsibility with regard to returning refugees, the overall dimensions of the problem required a comprehensive approach involving bilateral and multilateral efforts. Assistance to Mozambique, for example, should be coordinated at a high level, and it was hoped that progress towards peace would make it possible to focus attention on that issue.

3. IOM was the operational partner of UNHCR in assisting the return of refugees to Afghanistan and South Africa. In Cambodia, his organization was

/...

(Mr. Schatzer)

working with the United Nations system to facilitate development through the return of qualified nationals. Although the activities of IOM were coming to an end in Iraq it continued to monitor the situation there and would provide services to persons in need in neighbouring countries. In the former Yugoslavia, IOM was part of an inter-agency network providing assistance for the transport of refugees and former detainees to countries offering temporary safe haven. Those examples demonstrated the growing number of situations where movements of people called for IOM involvement and inter-agency coordination. There was a need to study the build-up of migratory pressures that might lead to humanitarian emergencies. In that respect, IOM hoped that a series of independent research networks set up in various regions under its auspices to study factors creating such pressure would enhance the United Nations early-warning capacity.

4. IOM took note of the recent plans to streamline the Organization's appeal structures and was looking forward to further cooperation with the United Nations field representatives, particularly in view of the limited effectiveness of Headquarters-based coordination.

5. Mr. IBRAHIM (Djibouti) said that since the beginning of 1991, his country had been receiving growing numbers of refugees as a result of the multiple conflicts in neighbouring countries and had set up reception camps for them inside its territory. The situation of the refugees in the camps was a cause of profound concern for his Government. The living conditions there were precarious because of a lack of facilities and humanitarian aid; and there were numerous cases of severe malnutrition among the children. The efforts undertaken by Djibouti in cooperation with UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP) had not been sufficient to cope with the problem.

6. Thousands of refugees lived in the streets of the capital in a state of total deprivation, without access to any foreign assistance. That situation had given rise to an unprecedented upsurge in crime and placed a very heavy burden on already limited resources and weak infrastructure. Djibouti's repeated appeals to the international community for assistance had gone unheeded. Djibouti was continuing to demonstrate compassion for the thousands of refugees in the country; nevertheless, his Government could no longer shoulder the burden alone without jeopardizing its own security and stability. It was imperative therefore for the international community to provide assistance. In order to stem the flows of refugees from Somalia, the relevant United Nations bodies, particularly UNHCR and WFP, with the support of the international community, should speedily establish refugee camps under their direct supervision in Somalia and provide for the basic needs of the refugees.

7. His Government called upon the United Nations system to find a solution to the problems of the refugees in Djibouti and mobilize additional resources. His country required the active assistance of UNHCR in order to find viable solutions to the problems of refugees in its capital. There was

/...

(Mr. Ibrahim, Djibouti)

no alternative to their transfer to UNHCR camps in the countryside; however, the provision of adequate assistance was essential.

8. The power struggles and inter-clan conflicts in Somalia itself had caused the death of more than 300,000 people; and more than half of the population might die of hunger. In spite of the heroic efforts by humanitarian organizations and the resources provided by the international community, more must be done. The programme of action for Somalia should have the total support of the international community. The non-food sector, in particular, should be given the attention it deserved in order to increase emergency assistance to that country.

9. In spite of its modest means, Djibouti was also taking part in the international community's humanitarian efforts. Its port, airport and railroad played an important role in the shipment of food to Somalia and Ethiopia. Furthermore, his Government had provided food aid to Somalia and had recently sent a medical team to that country.

10. Mr. BIZIMANA (Rwanda) commended the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (A/47/12) and said that his delegation fully supported the position that though voluntary repatriation was the preferred durable solution to refugee problems, it could not be stable nor truly durable without meaningful reintegration rooted in national development and reconciliation.

11. Referring to paragraph 114 of the report, which discussed the problem of Rwandese refugees, it was clear that the drawing up of the Plan of Action had not yet been completed, despite the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration. His Government was troubled by the tendency to link implementation of the Plan of Action for Rwandese refugees to a cease-fire. Admittedly, the repatriation of Rwandese refugees could only occur once peace had been restored, but it was nevertheless imperative that the Plan of Action should be expedited so as to assist repatriation of those wishing to return immediately following the signing of the peace agreement currently under negotiation, and in the interest of national reconciliation and democratization.

12. Referring to the report of the Secretary-General (A/47/529), he drew attention to an inaccuracy in paragraph 21. As indicated in the High Commissioner's report (A/47/12, para. 114), studies had in fact not yet been carried out in Burundi and Zaire. The High Commissioner should endeavour to have those studies carried out as quickly as possible, since the implementation of the Plan of Action depended in part on them. In concluding, he said that his Government, with the help of the international community, was determined to resolve once and for all the problem of Rwandese refugees.

13. Mr. KÄÄRIÄ (Finland) said that his country fully supported the priorities outlined by the High Commissioner in her plan, including emergency preparedness, voluntary repatriation and promotion of solutions through

/...

(Mr. Kääriä, Finland)

preventive measures. UNHCR should take full advantage of recent favourable political developments to expand its repatriation programmes. Special attention, however, should be given to the situation of returning refugees, who required support through comprehensive economic, social and political programmes. Development agencies and non-governmental organizations should be involved in order to ensure the best conditions for integration.

14. Preventive measures should be higher on UNHCR's agenda and should be an integral part of its mandate and planning. Special attention should be given to volatile regions where there was a danger of mass displacements. Institution building, training and information were important practical components of such measures. His Government supported all efforts to find a political solution in the former Yugoslavia and stressed that humanitarian measures were indispensable. He expressed appreciation for the coordinated efforts of UNHCR and various organizations in assisting people in that region, often under the most dangerous conditions. It was of paramount importance to provide massive humanitarian aid to prevent further human suffering during the coming winter, especially in Bosia and Herzegovina. With regard to Somalia, the United Nations system had not been able to tackle the problem in the best possible way, owing to the complex problems in that country. Efforts to find appropriate political and humanitarian solutions should be urgently stepped up.

15. The mandate of UNHCR had been flexible enough to permit it to operate in complex, so-called "refugee-like" situations. In such cases, requests should in future also come through the Secretary-General. Assurances should also be given to UNHCR that it would receive the necessary human and financial resources; and better mechanisms should be developed to protect legitimate asylum-seekers. Lastly, Finland expressed full support for the Office in carrying out its demanding tasks.

16. Mrs. DA SILVA (Venezuela) underscored the need to reconsider the definition of a refugee, taking into account the one set forth in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the new factors resulting from the complexities of the current situation and the relevant provisions of the Cartagena Declaration. In that connection, her delegation supported the work carried out by the Working Group on Solutions and Protection established by the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, the seven categories of persons associated with the search for asylum and refuge, and the 21 recommendations put forward by the Group.

17. Venezuela had received 2,000 refugees from various parts of the world, and was taking steps to enact legislation for the application of the international instruments on the status of refugees. Her Government had informed UNHCR that it was prepared to receive 300 to 500 refugee family groups for relocation. It was gratifying to learn that UNHCR continued to make progress in implementing its Policy on Refugee Women and that the Guidelines on Protection of Refugee Women had been introduced to guide field workers in identifying needs. Venezuela welcomed the appointment of a Senior

(Mrs. Da Silva, Venezuela)

Coordinator on Refugee Children and commended the support provided in that regard by the Norwegian Government.

18. She noted with satisfaction that further progress had been made in the process set in motion by the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA) in order to promote lasting solutions. The holding of the Central American Regional Forum on Refugees, Uprooted and Returnee Women (FOREFEM) had been a positive step. Venezuela supported the UNHCR strategy aimed at prevention, preparedness and finding solutions as well as the idea of promoting cooperation with other United Nations human rights bodies in order to strengthen the prevention component. Although the consideration of humanitarian measures might lead to political solutions, it could not replace political agreements. Venezuela also supported the measures taken to ensure a more active response to emergency situations, which had considerably increased in number in the past year. The cooperation between UNHCR and UNDP in formulating projects for productive activities was useful. Lastly, Venezuela supported the idea of strengthening the institution of asylum, which was becoming increasingly important in view of the ongoing mass violations of human rights.

19. Mr. ROGERS (Belize), speaking on behalf of the 12 members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that in 1992, there had been a mass movement of people fleeing economic hardships, poverty, human rights violations and internal strife. The members of CARICOM were particularly concerned about Haiti, where widespread abuse of human rights and a deterioration in the economic and social conditions had caused more than 20,000 people to flee. The Twelve expressed appreciation for the invaluable contribution of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees towards alleviating the plight of Haitians.

20. The treatment of refugees and displaced persons should go hand in hand with the protection of their fundamental human rights. Wherever possible, States should apply the standards set forth in the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. In the case of women, the Twelve noted encouraging progress in the implementation of the Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women, who along with children, constituted the largest group of refugees.

21. CARICOM member States agreed that voluntary repatriation of refugees was the preferred durable solution. In 1992, 1.5 million refugees had returned to their countries of origin voluntarily. But repatriation was successful only if conditions in the country of origin were conducive to integrating the refugees into social and economic development. The noted improvements in the refugee situation in Central America and Indochina were directly connected to the success of comprehensive regional approaches to refugee problems. The International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA) had been particularly effective in assisting repatriation.

(Mr. Rogers, Belize)

22. CARICOM member States were pleased to note that voluntary contributions to UNHCR had risen substantially in 1991, but considered that the current level of support should be maintained to ensure adequate financing. There was a special need for increased funding in emergencies requiring UNHCR's immediate response and also for the provision of assistance to developing countries of temporary and permanent asylum. CARICOM member States encouraged closer cooperation with non-governmental organizations in areas of relief assistance and developmental projects.

23. His Government's policy was geared towards the protection of refugees, who constituted 20 per cent of the population of Belize, and their integration into its multi-ethnic society. Integration had proved very successful, as the majority of refugees and displaced persons were dispersed throughout Belize. None the less, his Government also honoured requests for voluntary repatriation. The Government was convinced that CIREFCA had had significant successes in Central America and, with the assistance of UNHCR and other relevant United Nations agencies, had played an integral role in voluntary repatriation and had contributed immensely to regional peace. In view of the new challenges that would have to be met in the areas of repatriation, integration and protection, his Government urged the international community to lend firm support to the continuation of the CIREFCA process over the next two years.

24. Mrs. KABA CAMARA (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the refugee problem was universal, thus requiring a global approach. The situation in the Persian Gulf and Central Europe, particularly in the former Yugoslavia, coupled with the worsening conflicts in the Horn of Africa and Liberia, had stifled the optimism created by the end of the cold war that conflicts would be settled peacefully and followed by increased repatriation. Refugees could only be protected with the cooperation of the Governments concerned, although the overall problem was the responsibility of the entire international community.

25. The high number of refugees in the developing countries created intolerable pressure on their fragile economies. In Africa, it further jeopardized the precarious socio-economic situation in the host countries, where people were already struggling for survival. The international community therefore had a moral obligation to provide emergency assistance. It should also encourage integrated development with a view to preventing tension between local populations and refugees.

26. Her delegation wished to draw attention to the plight of refugee women and children, who constituted some 80 per cent of refugees and needed extra help. It had therefore welcomed the appointment of the Senior Coordinator for Refugee Women.

27. Côte d'Ivoire already hosted some 300,000 Liberian refugees. However, its attempts to resolve the conflict in Liberia had been ruined by the intransigence of some parties, which had led to the resumption of

(Mrs. Kaba Camara, Côte d'Ivoire)

hostilities. Voluntary repatriation thus interrupted, her country was likely to experience a further influx. The members of the Economic Community of West African States needed international support for their efforts to bring peace to Liberia, particularly regarding the implementation of the Yamoussoukro IV Agreement, and to cope with the flow of refugees.

28. Faced with the tragic situation in Somalia, the international community should make up for lost time and intensify its efforts to save lives; measures must also be taken to protect convoys carrying humanitarian aid. As for Bosnia and Herzegovina, which merited special concern in view of the approaching winter, she hoped that the negotiations begun in London would be successful, thereby enabling its refugees to return home.

29. The international community should take measures aimed at deterring perpetrators from committing the intolerable human rights violations and atrocities often accompanying the conflicts which were a major cause of refugee movements. Natural disasters, which also created refugees, tended to provoke a much more rapid and generous reaction than phenomena of a less immediate character, such as the drought afflicting parts of Africa. Yet nature could be conquered if the peace dividends resulting from disarmament were used to preserve the environment and revitalize desert regions.

30. Since the refugee problem was exacerbated by regional conflicts, her country welcomed the revival of activity in the Security Council since the end of the cold war. Leaders in countries affected by refugee movements should be willing to enter into negotiations and renounce force; a total embargo on arms transfers in such areas would also be helpful. That was the responsibility of the entire international community, which should respect the relevant Security Council resolutions. The preventive measures advocated by the Secretary-General in "An agenda for peace" (A/47/277-S/24111) would also be useful.

31. The international community also had a duty to ensure that all countries had decent living conditions, which would help to stem migrations. By ignoring the situation, the rich countries, which were equally liable to experience refugee invasions, were mortgaging their own futures. It was therefore in the universal interest to support sustainable development in the developing countries.

32. Voluntary repatriation could only occur in conditions which guaranteed dignity and security. A general amnesty could calm fears among repatriated persons concerning the possible loss of freedom once they returned home, while satisfactory housing and employment would encourage them to return voluntarily.

33. She commended the promising results obtained by the countries of Central America on implementing the Esquipulas II Agreement, which demonstrated that determination and political will always bore fruit. The international community should redouble its efforts to create conditions throughout southern

/...

(Mrs. Kaba Camara, Côte d'Ivoire)

Africa which would speed up the return of refugees to their countries of origin. Above all, however, lasting peace should be restored, while repatriated persons should have guaranteed safety. Finally, her Government wished to thank the various organizations and Governments assisting the Liberian refugees; their representatives worked tirelessly in difficult conditions, often at risk to their own lives.

34. Ms. AL-HAMAMI (Yemen) praised UNHCR efforts to help the Yemeni authorities and the Red Crescent to cope with the influx of refugees in her country and reinforce the UNHCR office in Sana'a to face the emergency situation. Moreover, in response to General Assembly resolution 46/174, which had called for special assistance to Yemen, various international organizations had assisted in such ways as coordinating humanitarian aid and providing medicines and supplies. As indicated at the round-table meeting held in Geneva in June 1992, the large influx was a priority issue which required help from donors. She hoped that her Government's specific requirements would be discussed at meetings with donor States in Sana'a.

35. Her country believed, however, that the degree of suffering was still greater than the amount of aid it had hoped to receive. Refugees continued to flood into the main towns, creating additional pressure on food supplies and basic services, and worsening the unemployment situation. She enumerated her Government's efforts to cope with the crisis, which had provoked a state of emergency. They included the allocation of funds to those who assisted returnees and the creation of employment opportunities.

36. Finally, underlining the recommendation in document A/47/283 that the Government of Yemen should continue to receive support from the international community, she said that financial and technical assistance would enhance Yemen's ability to cope with the socio-economic needs arising from the large influx of refugees and returnees.

37. Mr. TÜRK (Slovenia) said that the unprecedented 18 million refugees in the world represented a considerable burden for the host countries and called for a more equitable sharing of that burden. The international community must work actively to remedy the plight of refugees and asylum-seekers and also to eliminate the root causes of the refugee flows.

38. The armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina had caused enormous human suffering and material destruction. A pattern of mass exoduses was now occurring and was pushing the affected areas of Europe into long-term poverty and instability. The general situation of refugees world wide and in areas neighbouring Slovenia was a serious cause of concern.

39. His Government had previously given notification of its succession to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. However, the mass exodus from the former Yugoslavia into Slovenia went considerably beyond situations envisaged by the drafters of the Convention and the Protocol. His Government had, inter alia, devoted a large portion of its

/...

(Mr. Türk, Slovenia)

budget, most of its commodity reserves and all emergency buffer stocks to assisting the refugees. His Government commended the efforts of UNHCR to provide humanitarian relief in the former Yugoslavia and expressed gratitude to other international and national humanitarian organizations for their assistance to refugees in Slovenia.

40. At the International Meeting on Humanitarian Aid for Victims of the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia, held in July 1992, his Government had proposed the establishement of safety zones in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Those zones would prevent the so-called "ethnic cleansing" and help to keep refugees as close to their homes as possible. His Government was prepared to assist in organizing accommodation for the refugees in such zones but thus far it had been impossible to set up the zones owing to the failure of international efforts to stop the fighting in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

41. Mr. LIU Zhixian (China) said that the decisions and conclusions adopted by the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme at its forty-third session provided a generally objective view of the current refugee situation and its root causes, and gave guidance for future work.

42. The grave refugee problem was closely related to world peace and development. The international community should make a concerted effort to combat foreign aggression, colonialism and racial discrimination and to ensure respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs so as to remove the political root causes of the problem. Meanwhile, it was important to restructure the existing unjust international order, narrow the gap between the South and the North and help developing countries to develop their economies.

43. UNHCR should continue to adhere to its humanitarian and non-political role. Refugee work should be free of ideological debate and politicization. While assistance to refugees and displaced persons in all regions should be stepped up, the international community should not scale down assistance to those who desperately needed help in Asia, Africa and Latin America, where the majority of such persons were to be found. The problem should be addressed in a spirit of shared responsibility. Traditional donors were urged to increase their humanitarian assistance and others to contribute generously. The international community should try to help the many developing countries that were receiving refugees.

44. UNHCR had been particularly effective in repatriating refugees and in assisting and protecting women and children. His delegation supported the Office's emphasis on improving its ability to respond to emergency situations, and favoured the proposal that the resolution of refugee problems should be combined with development assistance and environmental protection. Practicality should be a guiding principle at all stages. The International Meeting on Humanitarian Aid for Victims of the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia and the recent conference on assistance to Somali refugees should contribute greatly towards enhanced international assistance to refugees.

(Mr. Liu Zhixian, China)

45. In recent years, China had been taking an active part in assisting refugees, in accordance with its obligations under the 1951 Convention. It had admitted and resettled 300,000 Indo-Chinese refugees and was providing assistance to other refugees on a bilateral and multilateral basis. It had made substantial donations of medicines and other relief supplies to the Somali people and had decided to contribute $50,000 for humanitarian assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina. In conclusion, he said that China would continue to strengthen its cooperation with UNHCR and other relevant bodies.

46. Mr. MELAMED (Israel) commended the work of UNHCR and in particular, its efforts to secure international protection for refugees, and agreed with the High Commissioner on the difficulty of applying preventive strategies while ensuring the fundamental rights of human beings to live free of hunger and fear.

47. Of the many humanitarian issues facing the international community, developments in Yugoslavia, reminiscent of past history had struck a special chord in Israel. The Israeli leadership had taken immediate action, dispatching a member of the Knesset on a fact-finding mission, holding a special debate in the Knesset and sending a relief consignment of food and medical supplies for the population of Sarajevo. Private and public organizations had sent relief supplies, and a delegation of Israeli Muslim leaders had gone to Croatia to examine the best forms of assistance to Muslim refugees from Bosnia. Israel had received nearly 500 refugees from the former Yugoslavia as immigrants and had given some 250 temporary asylum.

48. The conflict in Yugoslavia and the famine in Somalia should serve as a warning to all mankind, especially at a time of hope for a new era of peace and understanding. The timely provision of emergency aid at the right place must be followed up by UNHCR efforts to rehabilitate the refugees.

49. Israel, whose population was largely made up of refugees, to whom should be added 400,000 immigrants in the previous three years, could but support UNHCR operations and share its own experience.

50. Mr. MONTAÑO (Mexico) said that the changing global situation since the end of the cold war, resulting in complex new refugee flows, called for a thorough, urgent re-examination of the work of UNHCR in order to avoid one-sided interpretations warranting recourse to the so-called right to interfere on the pretext of some new international humanitarian law. The refugee situation was indissociably linked to human rights and development, and UNHCR's renewed mandate must therefore be based on economic recovery.

51. Credit was due to UNHCR for its work, particularly in the massive repatriation of refugees. International solidarity was needed in order to provide refugees with asylum and protection until they were able to return to their homes in safety and dignity. UNHCR's commendable new threefold strategy, focusing on emergency preparedness, prevention and solutions, also

(Mr. Montaño, Mexico)

pointed to the need for a further refinement of its mandate. The principles underlying such action must be respect for the human rights of displaced persons, on the one hand, and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, on the other. UNHCR must be given an enhanced role in inter-agency coordination for humanitarian assistance. His delegation welcomed the holding of the recent International Meeting on Humanitarian Aid for Victims of the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia, which had highlighted the non-political and humanitarian character of UNHCR and its resolve to address new refugee problems. In the current context, UNHCR's role should be broadened to include other categories, such as the flows of internally displaced persons.

52. The need for a prompt response to new massive refugee flows must not lead to neglect of critical refugee situations in other parts of the world. The Government of Mexico was continuing to participate actively in the implementation of the Plan of Action of the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA). Substantial progress was being made towards the pacification of the region, which would ultimately lead to the resolution of the refugee problem, thanks largely to the political will shown by Governments, especially that of El Salvador. That will was reflected in the agreements reached by the CIREFCA Follow-up Committee, demonstrating the Governments' resolve to find durable solutions to the problem of displacement, seen as indissociable from human rights, peace, democracy and development. His delegation consequently welcomed the decision to extend the Plan of Action until May 1994, and urged the international community to participate in the important follow-up process by continuing to provide political and financial support for CIREFCA programmes. The extended mandate of the CIREFCA process should enable its results to be consolidated in the near future through a more active role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in integrating refugee and returnee issues in the region's development programmes.

53. Mr. SIRELKHATIM (Sudan) reiterated that, despite its economic difficulties, his country had spared no effort in carrying out its firm moral and legal commitment to the protection of large numbers of refugees from neighbouring countries. Underlining its cosponsorship of the draft resolution on the continuation of UNHCR for a further five years, he agreed that refugee emergencies should be dealt with by early preparedness, more effective coordination between the relevant agencies and a balancing of the interests of the countries concerned.

54. Citing the failed voluntary repatriation of Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees, he said that if further complications were to be avoided, international efforts were now even more essential to address the serious obstacles which had caused the impasse. His delegation fully agreed that the gap between relief and development, which were inextricably linked, should be closed. The relevant agencies should therefore coordinate their work to such end, an approach also apparently favoured by the authorities in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

/...

(Mr. Sirelkhatim, Sudan)

55. His delegation commended UNHCR plans to address, together with other agencies, questions related to environmental degradation in the areas hosting refugees in the Sudan. Meanwhile, his country would continue to cooperate with UNHCR until voluntary repatriation became a reality. Underlining matters of concern to his delegation, he said that the complex refugee problem in the Horn of Africa had created situations which, being beyond UNHCR's traditional mandate, had broadened its activities to encompass an innovative multi-dimensional approach. Voluntary repatriation was a matter of choice, and the protection and well-being of refugees was the continued responsibility of international humanitarian efforts for as long as such situations existed, regardless of any treaty clauses to the contrary. Attaching great importance to the voluntary and orderly repatriation of Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries, he hoped that the necessary assistance for their repatriation and reintegration would be provided. Additionally, in continuing to explore all peaceful means of ending the civil strife in the southern Sudan and to address the root causes of past displacements, his Government hoped for cooperation between all parties and looked forward to a further round of peace talks in Abuja.

56. He strongly reiterated his Government's request to UNHCR to exercise its responsibilities towards Sudanese refugee children, whose continued plight of abduction, conscription and exploitation by the rebel movement required an urgent humanitarian response in order to secure their safety, repatriation and reunification with their families. His Government was still awaiting a report from UNHCR on the disappearance of thousands of those refugee children from their camp. Finally, he reiterated the Sudan's proposal for an international conference on the refugee problem in the Horn of Africa, which it would be happy to host.

57. Mr. Krenkel (Austria), Chairman, took the Chair.

58. Mr. HUSLID (Norway) said that, during 1992, the demands on UNHCR had been unprecedented owing to events which had caused serious refugee situations to occur in various parts of the world. Although there was now wider scope for international action to deal with the root causes, large-scale repatriation would pose major challenges to UNHCR and the international community. The complexities of those challenges had been on the agenda of the recent annual session of the Executive Committee in Geneva. As indicated by the highest-ever attendance of Governments at the session, refugee problems were of universal concern.

59. His Government hoped that the General Assembly would echo the broad support given to the High Commissioner's innovative approach in implementing the threefold strategy of preparedness, prevention and solutions. It also supported her efforts to act as a catalyst vis-à-vis the United Nations system and relevant outside partners, and welcomed the close working relations with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in complex emergency situations.

/...

(Mr. Huslid, Norway)

60. Norway welcomed the move towards more comprehensive international responses. Above all, political initiatives were needed in order to address the root causes of displacement. There was a need for close coordination between political bodies and humanitarian agencies, and his delegation fully supported the High Commissioner's efforts to maintain the issues of displacement on the political agenda while preserving the non-political and humanitarian approach of the Office. With due regard for their respective mandates, there should also be closer contact between UNHCR and United Nations human rights machinery.

61. As demands grew, UNHCR was depending more than ever on the cooperation and financial support of the international community. Burden-sharing should be the overriding principle guiding such action. One way in which UNHCR's operations could be supported might be for Governments to develop stand-by arrangements for secondment of personnel. In the previous year Norway had, by special agreement, been able to provide competent staff to several UNHCR emergency operations.

62. The search for durable solutions lay at the heart of UNHCR's mandate. Traditional solutions were still valid, but priority should be given to facilitating voluntary repatriation. UNHCR had a leading role to play in mobilizing concerted international action and ensuring safe return through access and monitoring. Lack of infrastructure, the gap between relief and development and concerns about protection underscored the need for comprehensive and innovative approaches. Norway called for the strengthening of regional approaches involving the participation of the countries concerned in an inter-agency, intergovernmental and non-governmental framework from the planning to the implementation stage. Lessons could be drawn from the CIREFCA process in Central America and the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees. Traditional distinctions between refugees, returnees and affected population, including the internally displaced, should not be stressed. Norway had promoted that approach to the Mozambican situation and hoped to see it actively pursued.

63. The protective function of UNHCR was carried out within a complex legal framework. Refugee law must, however, be complemented by humanitarian law and human rights. Efforts to prevent flows of refugees must go hand in hand with full respect for the institution of asylum. Large groups of persons also needed temporary protection outside their country of origin as was the case in parts of the former Yugoslavia. Norway called on all States concerned to cooperate in eliminating all forms of "ethnic cleansing". It had offered temporary protection to released prisoners of war and their families, but stressed the right of those persons to return to their country of origin.

64. Norway would continue to lend its strong support to UNHCR. In conclusion, he said that the safety and security of personnel participating in relief operations, in situations of great risk, was the responsibility of all the parties involved.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly
FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION
Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
37th meeting
held on
Thursday, 12 November 1992
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 37th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. JALLOW (Vice-Chairman) (Gambia)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 96: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (continued)

(b) QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS (continued)

(c) HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued)

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/47/SR.37
3 December 1992
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

/...

In the absence of Mr. Krenkel (Austria), Mr. Jallow (Gambia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 96: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued) (A/47/131, 178, 280, 296, A/47/351-S/24357, A/47/364, 365, 391, 564, 569 and A/47/638-S/24772)

(a) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (continued) (A/47/12 and Add.1)

(b) QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS (continued) (A/47/91-S/23585, A/47/529 and Corr.1)

(c) HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued) (A/47/352, A/47/420-S/24519, A/47/455-S/24571 and A/47/540)

1. Mr. CUEVA (Honduras), speaking on behalf of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, said that the Second Meeting of the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA) had been held in April 1992 in San Salvador and had addressed important subjects such as the strengthening of peace, national reconciliation and democracy for the Central American region. In that context, consideration had been given to the urgent need to solve problems by creating economic and social conditions promoting the reintegration of the refugees and displaced persons directly affected by the armed conflicts of the previous decade. The different topics discussed included access to land and credit, availability of basic services such as health, education and drinking water, and obtaining land and employment. In addition, the Meeting had reaffirmed the importance of strengthening the mechanisms for implementing the CIREFCA Plan of Action, setting up a data bank and continuing to evaluate projects and their financing.

2. The countries of the region had met on 12 May in Managua in order to reaffirm the validity of the Plan of Action and the intention to participate in joint coordination with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in order to make it more dynamic. The participants in the Meeting had reiterated the view that the High Commissioner should continue to direct that work in order to bring about the complete reintegration of the returnees. They had stressed that UNDP should formulate more specific programmes and coordinate more effectively its activities with other agencies and that the non-governmental organizations should maintain complementary programmes that supported the valiant efforts by the CIREFCA participating Governments. The cooperating parties should provide their pledged contributions since those funds would make it possible to ensure rehabilitation and consolidate peace.

/...

(Mr. Cueva, Honduras)

3. On 29 September 1992, a joint UNHCR/UNDP working group had met with the Follow-up Committee in order to analyse the results of the Managua meeting. Among the main conclusions, it had been pointed out that some cooperating countries were losing interest in the region and that only a group of countries was willing to carry out the commitments undertaken. Surprise had been caused by the criticisms expressed by some cooperating countries that had regarded as technically lacking the execution of projects which, nevertheless, had been formulated with the technical support and ongoing supervision of UNHCR and UNDP. A request had been made to increase contributions, simplify communication and delivery mechanisms and ensure that they were more efficient and effective.

4. In order to improve that situation, UNHCR and UNDP should give stronger support to the Governments of the region in order to obtain more speedily the contributions offered by the cooperating countries. It was possible that when the refugee problems were transferred from UNHCR to UNDP in the middle of 1993, some of the gains achieved in helping refugees, displaced persons and returnees would be lost.

5. In creating the necessary conditions for ensuring the voluntary repatriation of thousands of refugees and carrying out the process of reconstruction, readaptation and reintegration into productive life, it was important to support and strengthen the agricultural, industrial and commercial activities for refugees and their communities. The Project for Displaced Persons, Refugees and Returnees in Central America, which was coordinated and executed by UNDP with the participation of other United Nations agencies, had favoured the execution of projects for population groups affected by mass displacement, conflict and extreme poverty in 15 different areas agreed upon with the Governments of six countries. Assistance had been provided for the community infrastructure, agriculture, health, education and promotion of human rights.

6. Mr. SLABY (Czechoslovakia) said that, of the 18 million current refugees, approximately 12 per cent had been accepted by the countries of Europe and North America. The great number of asylum-seekers and the lack of resources were the two biggest obstacles to solving the refugee problem. The largest proportion was due to so-called economic migration, especially in Africa. The refugee problem, or to be more exact, the problem of migration, was caused not only by political persecution, but also by lack of food. The international community should, therefore, deal with the issue of the responsibility of States for creating conditions leading to refugee flows and should draw up rules in that regard.

7. Czechoslovakia was a party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol and was one of the States cooperating with the United Nations and UNHCR to bring about a solution to the problem. His country had had its first experience in that respect in 1989 with the first

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

flow of refugees from Eastern Europe. More than 5,000 people had requested refugee status under the Geneva Convention, of which 25 per cent had been granted such status.

8. Czechoslovakia supported all the steps taken by the High Commissioner to eliminate the causes of the refugee problem and create conditions for the return of the refugees to their homes. Closer cooperation between UNHCR and his country had also been brought about through the opening of the Office of the regional UNHCR representative in Prague at the beginning of 1992.

9. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's initiative aimed at strengthening system-wide coordination through the establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Assistance. Such assistance should be based on the principle of international solidarity with the nations affected and the States that assumed the responsibility to receive refugees.

10. The United Nations should play a more active role in future monitoring situations that might lead to mass flows of refugees, adopt measures to prevent them and coordinate international assistance in areas where it was needed. His delegation supported the idea of establishing an international information, monitoring and early-warning system as well as preventive measures aimed at ensuring political stability, implementing human rights, solving the problems of ethnic minorities and alleviating the economic problems of the country in question. He also supported reforming legislation on refugees.

11. The Office's educational programmes, which facilitated the integration of refugees into the economies of the receiving States and, after repatriation, of the States of origin were important. In order to prevent abuse of the right to asylum for the purpose of economic migration, it was necessary to improve the exchange of information to uncover passport and visa fraud. Czechoslovakia had taken measures in cooperation with other European States to prevent abuse of asylum policies by economic migrants.

12. His delegation favoured a political solution to the refugee problem in different parts of the world, in particular the former Yugoslavia, in order to eliminate the current refugee flows and create conditions enabling them to return to their homes. Czechoslovakia was striving to participate actively in efforts to mitigate the sufferings of the victims of that civil war and was ready to assign its specialists to the UNHCR group of experts to provide assistance to those refugees.

13. His country did not support setting binding quotas for receiving refugees. Nevertheless, it agreed that humanitarian assistance would be provided in the most efficient way, if the refugees stayed in safe zones as close to their homes as possible. Establishing safe zones under the control of the United Nations should not, however, lead to the forced displacement of

/...

(Mr. Slaby, Czechoslovakia)

"undesired" groups from certain territories. Czechoslovakia recognized the status of temporary refugees by providing the same assistance to persons fleeing from the former Yugoslavia as to applicants for refugee status, without using standard asylum procedures.

14. His country had contributed $25,000 to the UNHCR budget to solve the problem of the receiving States and had given material assistance to Hungary in the amount of $75,000. His country's aim was to take part in the development of international cooperation to mitigate the hardships of persons who had become refugees through no fault of their own.

15. Mr. STEFANOV (Bulgaria) said that, undoubtedly, the problem of refugees and migrants went beyond the boundaries of individual States, making joint international efforts and effective cooperation indispensable. The implementation of an overall policy involving measures to promote development, education and other social programmes should encourage potential refugees or migrants to remain in their countries. The objective of the Organization's prevention activities was to eliminate or reduce the factors compelling refugee flows.

16. Bulgaria agreed that, in addition to seeking durable solutions in economic and social development and strengthening international and regional security, an emergency preparedness and response mechanism should be included in order to deal effectively with every situation. It shared the view that resolution 46/182 provided a framework for an appropriate United Nations response to complex humanitarian emergency situations.

17. The emergence of new refugee situations underlined the importance of devising new approaches and tools for their protection. In reality, not all individuals participating in mass migrations met the requirements established under the Geneva Convention of 1951. Bulgaria welcomed the establishment by the Executive Committee of a Working Group on Solutions and Protection and commended its efforts to define specific categories of persons requesting asylum and refuge. The recommendations contained in the report of the Working Group constituted an appropriate basis for finding durable solutions to the problem of definitions.

18. Emphasis must be placed on the importance of productive coordination and an active working relationship between UNHCR and other relevant United Nations bodies such as the Human Rights Committee, the Committee against Torture, the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. UNHCR provided valuable assistance and advice to States on refugee legislation, procedures for determining the legal status of refugees and the creation of institutional infrastructure.

/...

(Mr. Stefanov, Bulgaria)

19. Regarding the conflict in Yugoslavia, he said that the selfless efforts of UNHCR staff on behalf of the refugees and displaced persons in that country in preparation for winter must be recognized. Unfortunately, those efforts were being undermined by the continuing policy of "ethnic cleansing". Ethnic conflicts in Macedonia indicated that the potential for violent confrontation had not yet been exhausted. The international community should redouble its efforts and take decisive measures to prevent a dangerous expansion of the conflict.

20. Bulgaria fully supported UNHCR objectives in the former Yugoslavia, namely, to prevent further displacement and to facilitate the return of displaced persons to their homes. Some non-governmental organizations, among them the Bulgarian Red Cross, were providing assistance to refugees in Bulgaria.

21. Early in 1992, the Bulgarian Parliament had passed a law ratifying the Convention of 1951 relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol of 1967. The forthcoming enactment of a decision under study by the Legislative Assembly regarding a declaration in accordance with article 1, section B (1) of that Convention would conclude the constitutional procedures for its ratification.

22. On 23 October 1992, the Government of Bulgaria had established a National Office for Asylum and Refugees for the purpose of providing legal and administrative protection to individuals seeking asylum, ensuring concerted action for the adoption of measures designed to implement the Geneva Convention of 1951 and the Protocol of 1967, cooperating with the High Commissioner and assisting her in the fulfilment of her duties, as provided by international agreements. In addition, an agreement would be signed between the Government of Bulgaria and the High Commissioner for Refugees. A UNHCR Liaison Office had been in operation in Sofia for two months. UNHCR activities held in Bulgaria included an October 1991 seminar on refugee law and a March 1992 seminar on emergency management. Those seminars had considered such matters as protection against deportation and expulsion, personal safety of refugees and related emergency measures. His delegation wished to affirm its full support to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the pursuit of its lofty goals.

23. Ms. SYAHRUDDIN (Indonesia) said that the refugee situation had not improved and the world-wide refugee population had reached more than 17 million. Although the transformation of international relations had contributed to the settlement of some refugee situations through voluntary repatriation, regional conflicts had prompted new flows. Progress was being made in some regions, such as Central America and South-East Asia. Events in the Horn of Africa continued to cause internal displacement of population, and Europe had been faced with refugee problems and their socio-economic impact on host countries. "Ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia and Herzegovina had threatened an entire people with extermination; their only hope for survival was to seek asylum in neighbouring States.

/...

(Ms. Syahruddin, Indonesia)

24. Furthermore, the developing countries continued to bear the larger portion of the world's refugee burden. Despite their own problems of structural adjustment, negative terms of trade, flight of capital and debt servicing, they were continuing to fulfil their humanitarian obligations, welcoming 70 per cent of the world's refugees and displaced persons.

25. The international community must focus on providing assistance to developing countries, with particular emphasis on Africa. The Tenth Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries had commended the United Nations and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations for the assistance provided to Somalia and neighbouring countries hosting Somali refugees. It had also addressed various political and economic issues that, if resolved, could facilitate the repatriation of refugees and resettlement of displaced persons.

26. Her delegation welcomed the unprecedented response of the international community to the activities of UNHCR, as noted in paragraph 31 of document A/47/12, and took note of the initiatives undertaken to enhance emergency response capacity. Greater cooperation among agencies could help to support such activities, particularly those that were development-oriented.

27. Indonesia had long participated in efforts to bring peace and stability to South-East Asia, particularly through implementation of the Paris Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict, which would help end the sufferings of the Cambodian people, and the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees. The Programme of Orderly Departures was the best method to prevent illegal departures and to address the issue of individuals seeking asylum and remaining in refugee camps for extended periods.

28. Mr. ZABIGAILO (Ukraine) said that the fall of the last empire, the emergence of new independent and sovereign States in Europe and Asia and the end of the cold war had created new possibilities and hopes for economies and for the fulfilment of human aspirations. Ukraine was among the most convincing examples of that change. After declaring independence in August 1991, the new State had made progress in building a democratic political system and in becoming integrated in the international community. However, its economy had not progressed to the same extent.

29. It was important that the transition from a totalitarian system to a political democracy should take place in a climate of stability. In the former Yugoslavia and some other States of Europe and Central Asia, the conflicts during the period of transition to a new society had provoked bloody and tragic confrontations and had endangered the lives of millions forced to flee their countries, thereby becoming an unprotected population.

/...

(Mr. Zabigailo, Ukraine)

30. Ukraine, a founding Member of the United Nations, regarded the problem as alarming, and therefore echoed the concern expressed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in her report (A/47/12). Ukraine had first-hand experience with the refugee problem as a result of the bloody clashes that had occurred in a neighbouring country, the Republic of Moldova. Guided in its domestic and foreign policy by humanitarian principles, the United Nations Charter and other instruments of international law, Ukraine had not wavered in providing support and in fulfilling its commitments to protect refugees from armed conflict and mass repression, despite the difficulties being experienced by its own people.

31. The international community and the Committee should focus attention on the complex problem that the Ukraine had inherited from the imperial past: the deported peoples, including Tartars, Germans, Greeks and Armenians, who, during the decades from 1930 to 1950, had been forced to relocate, thus becoming refugees. They had been resettled in places far from their homelands in the Republics of the former empire. Currently, more than 500,000 of those people, including 100,000 Ukrainians, wanted to return to their countries. Ukraine opened its doors to all desiring to return. To give an idea of the enormity of the task, he pointed out that thousands of new jobs, housing units, hospitals, schools, nurseries, etc. would have to be created. Ukraine would assume its responsibilities on the basis of the principles of humanitarian law and human rights, to develop norms and legal statutes to govern its humanitarian assistance activities.

32. Following the proclamation in November 1991 of the Declaration of the Rights of Nationalities, which rejected the idea of building a State on the basis of ethnic origin, Ukraine decided to ensure the strict observance of the rights of the citizens of over 100 nationalities in its territory and to guarantee the rights of religious minorities. The policy of Ukraine was based on the principle of creating living, political, economic and social conditions of equality enabling citizens not only to move about freely but also to live in dignity. That policy was fully in line with the basic elements of the strategy developed by the High Commissioner of applying preventive measures. In that connection, Ukraine agreed that the best way of dealing with the refugee problem was to prevent refugee flows and to eliminate or reduce the factors that affected or caused such flows. Only the right of States, reconciliation and agreement based on respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and the peaceful settlement of disputes could help to achieve a lasting solution to the problem.

33. Having understood the complexity of the issue and the fact that preventive measures did not always achieve the expected results, the international community was preparing through UNHCR and other participating United Nations agencies, including the Human Rights Committee, to take part in the work of the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference on Human Rights; other intergovernmental and non-governmental international organizations would also participate in the work.

/...

34. Ukraine was of the opinion that the 1951 Geneva Convention and 1967 Protocol were still the basic instruments for the protection of the rights of refugees. That was why it had decided to accede to the Convention and the Protocol and was in the process of finalizing the procedures for accession to those instruments.

35. Mr. BURCUOGLU (Turkey) said that the establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs had filled a big gap in the United Nations system and that it was necessary to rationalize the work of the United Nations and to establish effective coordination between the efforts of the United Nations and those of Governments and the institutions and organizations concerned. In that regard, he stressed the close operational links established by the High Commissioner with other United Nations agencies.

36. Although there had been a glimmer of hope for a solution to the refugee problem in 1992, there had also been more emergency situations and the number of refugees had increased considerably. UNHCR had had to face many difficulties and the international community realized once more that massive population movements could endanger international peace and security.

37. Turkey wished to stress the results achieved by the strategy that focused attention on preparing for, preventing and resolving emergency situations, which had been enhanced by the experience acquired during 1992 as well as the recommendations contained in document A/47/12/Add.1. Turkey also agreed with the conclusions of the Executive Committee concerning refugee women and children, who were the most vulnerable groups, and appreciated the High Commissioner's efforts on their behalf. The wave of intolerance, racism and xenophobia against refugees must definitely be stemmed, greater attention must be paid to reintegration as a permanent solution and more stress must be placed on the need to share the burden to the greatest extent possible through international assistance.

38. Turkey, a country that had traditionally provided asylum to refugees starting with the Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula from 1492 onwards spared no effort to alleviate the suffering of those seeking refuge. Turkey was continuously grappling with steady inflows of people from the south-east, the north-east, Iraq or Bosnia, to mention just the four most recent waves of refugees. It was also providing humanitarian assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina, whose sovereignty and territorial integrity were being flagrantly violated in total disregard of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Although the international community had firmly condemned the aggression of Serbia and the abhorrent practice of ethnic cleansing and had demanded an immediate halt to all violations, the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina continued to suffer. Neither the resolutions of the Security Council nor the decisions of the London Conference had been implemented. The approaching winter made it even more urgent to provide protection and shelter for the population because hundreds of thousands of people were at risk of extinction unless an effective response was forthcoming from the international community.

/...

(Mr. Burcuoglu, Turkey)

39. Although UNHCR obviously could not halt the Serbian aggression, it was up to the Security Council and the international community to accomplish that task. The Security Council and the international community must assume their historic responsibilities in the face of Serbian aggression and the abhorrent practice of ethnic cleansing, which constituted an act of genocide.

40. The creation of security zones for refugees from Bosnia was currently attracting particular interest and, in that connection, Turkey proposed the following: first, the demilitarization of urban areas such as Sarajevo, Tuzla, Goradjze, Bihac, Jajce and Travnik; second, the deployment of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in the demilitarized zones with a view to establishing militarily protected areas for the civilian population and making it easier to deliver humanitarian assistance to those who needed it; and third, the establishment of a network of safety corridors linking those areas. He expressed the hope that those proposals would be universally supported since the credibility of the United Nations was at stake.

41. Mr. SACIRBEY (Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that every day thousands of people from Bosnia and Herzegovina became victims of a deliberate policy to create refugees which constituted a crime against humanity. The refugees were not victims of an ethnic civil war but of a merciless aggressor bent on the creation of a "Greater Serbia". It was a well-known fact that the objective of the Belgrade Government and its proxies in Bosnia and Herzegovina was to create refugees through fear and terror.

42. In physical terms, the occupation forces had unleashed a policy of systematic murder of non-Serbian civilians and had brutally bombed civilian areas, cutting them off from food, water and electricity.

43. In psychological terms, they had terrorized thousands of people by threats and atrocities forcing them to flee their homes out of sheer terror.

44. In sociological terms, the aggressor forces were systematically destroying organizations and institutions of Muslim, Croatian and other non-Serb communities and persecuting, in particular, their political, religious and intellectual leaders.

45. In cultural terms, the aircraft and artillery of the aggressors were destroying the social, cultural and health structures in an attempt to sever all ties between the local population and the territories under occupation.

46. In economic terms, the Serbian and Montenegrin forces had stripped non-Serbs of their homes, farms and industries. Those and other brutal tactics were the elements of what had come to be known as ethnic cleansing.

47. Although his delegation appreciated the international community's condemnation of ethnic cleansing, it noted with great regret that ethnic

cleansing had intensified and the only result had been a considerable increase in the number of displaced persons. That refugee crisis had jeopardized the economic well-being and political security of neighbouring countries such as Croatia which had accepted more refugees than all other countries combined and yet, had been criticized, quite unfairly, at the international level, for not doing enough.

48. Although his Government appreciated the assistance provided by UNPROFOR, UNHCR, the international community and some non-governmental organizations to relieve the suffering of many people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, those noble efforts unfortunately represented only a fraction of what was needed; worse yet, most of the aid did not reach its destination because it was deliberately blocked by Serbian and Montenegrin nationalist forces.

49. The international community must therefore take much more vigorous action. In order to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid, one step that could be taken was the opening of the airport in the city of Tuzla - situated in a region currently under government control - since that airport had a greater capacity than Butmir airport in Sarajevo. Despite numerous requests to that effect, so far nothing had been done. Bosnia and Herzegovina also requested that the land corridors that had been promised should be established and protected and that Security Council resolution 770 (1992) should be implemented immediately.

50. Urgent and vigorous steps must also be taken to alleviate the situation of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the winter.

51. So far, responses to the tragedy had had minimal effect, and the aid sent had been insufficient. Mediation, negotiation and Serbian commitments to undisturbed delivery of humanitarian aid had, more often than not, served as a smokescreen for further Serbian aggression, translating into more suffering for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. A perverted racist dimension was present in that extremely tragic situation.

52. Mr. NIETO (Argentina) said that Argentina attached high priority to the work of the United Nations on the question of refugees and believed that although the High Commissioner was fully implementing her mandate, the new direction taken by the world after the end of the cold war and the accompanying problems imposed an increasingly heavy burden on UNHCR. Greater cooperation was therefore needed from all United Nations bodies and a renewed interpretation of their mandates. The Committee should focus on concerted and sustained action by bodies of the United Nations system, along with a strengthening of the security conditions of international staff. To that end, he drew attention to draft resolutions A/SPC/47/L.7 and L.8 submitted for the consideration of the Special Political Committee under the item: "Comprehensive review of the whole question of peace-keeping operations in all their aspects".

/...

(Mr. Nieto, Argentina)

53. The spread of conflicts involving ethnic and religious animosities and the mass suffering of displaced peoples offered a discouraging future outlook. At the international level, it was necessary to accord priority to the work of prevention and the search for solutions and, at the same time, to tackle the causes of the crises which led to movements of refugees and displaced persons. A broad system of information-gathering and analysis provided the basis for a possible early-warning system which could provide valuable services to UNHCR. The preventive strategies described by the High Commissioner in her introductory statement should also be noted. Argentina agreed that one form of prevention was achieved through presence, and that undertaking involved the entire United Nations system.

54. The strictly humanitarian role of UNHCR should prevail in all circumstances and it was the duty of everyone concerned to provide it with the necessary support to carry out its commendable task.

55. Mr. NOBILO (Croatia) said that the problem of refugees was a pressing burden which weighed heavily upon the world community; by all indications, it would increase in magnitude. Although it afflicted all parts of the world, a situation which Croatia deeply regretted, the territory of the former Yugoslavia was one of the worst affected, and one where the consequences could be most devastating in all respects, since more than 3 million people had been displaced and there had been massive destruction.

56. The Republic of Croatia commended the work carried out by UNHCR and by the various bodies, departments and organizations of the United Nations; it believed, however, that those organizations, in conjunction with other world bodies, needed to focus even more on addressing promptly the problems of refugees created by war and other man-made tragedies.

57. The recent introduction of democracy in Eastern and Central Europe had not brought the peace that was hoped for and instead, certain regimes, motivated by ideas of nationalism, territorial expansionism and racial and religious intolerance, had caused the greatest bloodshed and destruction in the region since the Second World War. The despicable policies and practices of the regime of Serbia and Montenegro went under the name of "ethnic cleansing", and that policy had created the greatest refugee crisis in Europe in the last half of the century and seriously threatened the peace and security of the region. Croatia agreed with the statement of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, appearing in the note by the Secretary-General entitled "The situation of human rights in the territory of the former Yugoslavia" (A/47/635) that "ethnic cleansing does not appear to be the consequence of the war, but rather its goal", because of the brutal atrocities that were being perpetrated, not only against people but also against property and the economic, social and cultural infrastructure.

58. As a result of that atrocious policy, there had been a tide of refugees, and Croatia, in addition to providing care within its territory for

(Mr. Nobilo, Croatia)

265,000 displaced persons, mainly from the United Nations protected areas, had had to accept 500,000 Muslims and Croats who had fled from Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was clear that a country like Croatia with 4,700,000 inhabitants, could not bear the burden of over 750,000 refugees and displaced persons indefinitely.

59. The cost of maintaining those refugees was approximately $100 million a month, an expense which Croatia was meeting on its own, without direct financial assistance from the world community, even though 37 per cent of its industrial capacity had been destroyed by the war, which had also inflicted an estimated $20 billion in war damage.

60. Most of the refugees had been accommodated by Croatian families, who received no financial assistance for that purpose, but many of those families were now succumbing to unemployment and hard economic conditions and could not continue to take care of the refugees. The situation was therefore becoming desperate.

61. Croatia was very grateful for all the international assistance that it had received in kind, in the form of food, medicine and clothing, but it now called on the international community to provide the necessary financial assistance to house and feed the 70,000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina, in particular during the winter.

62. In order to alleviate the situation in Croatia, financial assistance was required, and in addition the refugee burden needed to be shared by other countries which were in a position to accept them in their own territories. Moreover, refugee camps could be built in safe areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the international community could ensure their safety. The Government of Croatia was willing to provide logistic and humanitarian support to establish such centres as soon as possible. The return home of displaced persons who were currently in the United Nations protected areas would greatly alleviate the problem.

63. The international humanitarian assistance provided to refugees was valuable, but responded to the symptoms of the problem rather than the root causes. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, the cause of the refugee problem was the policy of "ethnic cleansing", which the world community should eliminate by mobilizing all its resources, including implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

64. His delegation hoped that coordinated international action would be able to relieve the tragic situation of millions of refugees in the former Yugoslavia and the rest of the world.

65. Mrs. LICHALE (Mozambique) said that the increasing number of refugees in various parts of the world was endangering the process of political and democratic change in many developing countries and constituted a threat to

(Mrs. Lichale, Mozambique)

international peace and security. The High Commissioner's devotion to the cause of refugees was therefore commendable.

66. In Africa, the situation of refugees and displaced persons was particularly critical and the persistence of adverse political, economic and environmental factors was making it worse.

67. Mozambique was seriously affected by the problem of refugees. A war which had lasted for 16 years and destroyed a large part of the country's economic and social infrastructure, along with devastating floods, cyclones and one of the worst droughts ever recorded, had left over 1.5 million refugees, who were living in neighbouring countries, and 4 million displaced persons.

68. Despite all those difficulties, the people of Mozambique had faith in the historic process occurring in their country and placed their hopes in the General Peace Agreement (S/24635) signed at Rome and, particularly, in the entry into force of the cease-fire. The new situation of peace would create the necessary conditions for the repatriation of refugees and the return of displaced persons to their homes.

69. The Government of Mozambique was prepared to do everything necessary to facilitate resettlement. The situation was so serious, however, that without outside help the Government would not be able to carry out the difficult task of housing and resettling the refugees in devastated areas where there were no longer any schools, hospitals or basic infrastructure. Mozambique therefore called on the international community to provide material, financial and technical assistance to the programmes of relief and rehabilitation for the refugees and displaced persons.

70. In accordance with the General Peace Agreement, an international donors' conference to finance the electoral process, emergency programmes and reintegration programmes for the displaced persons, refugees and demobilized soldiers in Mozambique would be held in Rome on 15 and 16 December 1992. Mozambique hoped that the international community would once again provide generous support, which had already saved millions of lives in its territory.

71. Mozambique was deeply grateful to the entire United Nations system and to neighbouring countries which, despite their own difficult economic situation, had made sacrifices and welcomed their brothers and sisters from Mozambique.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly
FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION
Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
38th meeting
held on
Friday, 13 November 1992
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 38th MEETING

Chairman:	Mr. JALLOW (Vice-Chairman)	(Gambia)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 96: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (continued)

(b) QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS (continued)

(c) HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued)

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/47/SR.38
23 November 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

/...

In the absence of Mr. Krenkel (Austria), Mr. Jallow (Gambia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 96: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued) (A/47/131, 178, 280, 296, A/47/351-S/24357, A/47/364, 365, 391, 564, 569 and A/47/638-S/24772)

(a) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (continued) (A/47/12 and Add.1)

(b) QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS (continued) (A/47/91-S/23585, A/47/529 and Corr.1)

(c) HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued) (A/47/352, A/47/420-S/24519, A/47/455-S/24571 and A/47/540)

1. Mr. WILLIS (Australia) said that, in response to increasing and more complex movements of people, including many who were not refugees within the terms of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had moved towards a broader humanitarian role. The new circumstances required an enhanced response capacity. However, while credit was due to UNHCR for its new three-pronged strategy of emergency preparedness, prevention and solutions and its search for practical ways of implementing the strategy, careful attention must be given to defining UNHCR's role in accordance with its resources, emphasizing maximum impact by focusing on activities for which it was best equipped, bearing in mind the need for effective response and rapid withdrawal. Moreover, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs had an essential role to play, both in coordinating institutional arrangements and in mobilizing political commitment.

2. Australia attached great importance to the question of international protection, as presented by UNHCR at the forty-third session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme. In developing the two crucial approaches of prevention and temporary protection, UNHCR must enhance its efforts to make all its mainstream programmes fully responsive to the needs of women and children.

3. UNHCR was to be applauded for its part in the substantial progress being made in voluntary repatriation, for example in Cambodia, elsewhere in South-East Asia through the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees, in Afghanistan, and in Central America through the process set in motion by the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA). In other parts of the world, however, critical refugee situations raised daunting challenges, notably in the former Yugoslavia, the Horn of

(Mr. Willis, Australia)

Africa and on the Myanmar-Bangladesh border. With reference to the latter, Australia had urged the Myanmar Government to facilitate the early and safe return of the refugees currently in camps in Bangladesh, and hoped that the Myanmar authorities would recognize the usefulness of a United Nations presence.

4. Concerted international responses, based on partnership between UNHCR and the international community and on renewed political commitment by all, were needed, and Australia would continue to assist the Office by maintaining a strong resettlement programme and providing financial and material assistance.

5. Mr. SNEGUR (Republic of Moldova) underscored the gravity of the problem of displaced persons in his country resulting from the conflict in the eastern region of the Republic stirred up by forces from outside the country and aggravated by the presence of the 14th Army of the Russian Federation. While the number of displaced persons had dropped after the cessation of military action, there were currently 2,800 registered displaced persons and a large number of United Nations registered ones. The problem affected more than 40 towns and villages, mostly in the eastern region. In the zone of conflict, there had been an increase in crime and violence against the native, Romanian-speaking Moldovan population, which was a minority in that area.

6. His Government was doing everything possible to improve the situation of the displaced persons and had established a State commission which provided them with housing, food, medical care and schooling. He expressed appreciation to the governmental and non-governmental organizations of many countries, particularly the United States, Canada, Romania, Hungary, Ukraine and Germany, for their support.

7. Those measures, however, would not solve the problem. Many families were still without housing and 1,200 persons capable of working remained unemployed. In order to protect their constitutional rights, the legislative bodies of the Republic were discussing a draft law defining the rights and duties of the authorities and the displaced persons.

8. Owing to the aggravated social and political situation in the countries that had comprised the former Soviet Union, a large number of nationals of those countries had recently arrived in the Republic of Moldova and requested refugee status. UNHCR should discuss that problem with the countries concerned and encourage them to sign the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Lastly, he reiterated his country's request for assistance from the Office in order to resolve the situation in an appropriate manner.

9. Mr. DEKANY (Hungary) agreed with UNHCR on the need to maintain the issue of refugees and displacement on the political agenda while preserving UNHCR's non-political and humanitarian approach, and to formulate policies aimed at contributing to the mutual reinforcement of political and humanitarian action. Although UNHCR was to be commended for its innovative approaches, the

/...

(Mr. Dekany, Hungary)

United Nations institutional response to humanitarian emergencies was not adequate to meet the broader challenges now faced. A global response involving the political, humanitarian and human rights elements of the United Nations system was needed.

10. A welcome trend in 1992 had been the increase in voluntary repatriation. Coordinated early warning and preventive diplomacy were key factors in the future strategy. The stronger country-of-origin focus might, however, be eroded by the lack of an adequate response capacity, whence the need for much closer intersectoral coordination within the United Nations, particularly in addressing human rights violations. Violations of minority rights, including moves to create ethnically homogeneous areas through "ethnic cleansing", were a particular cause of concern. An international presence was an essential element of prevention, and might usefully include on-site monitoring following the identification of human rights abuses.

11. In that context, closer cooperation was needed between UNHCR and United Nations human rights machinery. The information available to the Commission on Human Rights might be especially relevant to UNHCR early-warning activities. A mechanism for feedback between UNHCR and United Nations human rights monitoring mechanisms might also be considered. Hungary therefore fully supported the ideas for a preventive strategy submitted by UNHCR to the Commission on Human Rights.

12. Humanitarian and human rights considerations must be incorporated into political decision-making. UNHCR needed the active support and cooperation of the political arms of the United Nations, and the lead-agency concept should be further developed.

13. Hungary, a new member of the Executive Committee of the Programme, provided protection and shelter for over 120,000 refugees, and was fully committed to fulfilling its obligations under the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol. At the turn of the decade, Hungary had received over 50,000 refugees, mainly from Romania, and was now affording temporary protection to another 80,000 asylum-seekers from the former Yugoslavia. Despite limited resources, the Hungarian Government and people had given unstintingly. With bleak prospects for voluntary repatriation or resettlement in third countries, increasing numbers were contemplating local settlement.

14. Hungary was committed to modernizing its asylum legislation and creating conditions conducive to the withdrawal of its reservation on territorial restriction under the 1951 Convention. Hungary was grateful for the assistance provided by the European Community, individual donor countries and, in particular, UNHCR, as a vital complement to its own efforts to alleviate the plight of refugees and a prerequisite for the pursuit of its open refugee policy. The Hungarian Government was seeking agreements on voluntary repatriation, as in the current negotiations between Croatia, Hungary and UNHCR. It regretted that there had so far been no follow-up by Serbia to a similar initiative.

/...

(Mr. Dekany, Hungary)

15. There were some less well-known but potentially explosive aspects of the tragic situation in the former Yugoslavia. The Serbian plan to resettle tens of thousands of Serbs, under the guise of "refugee resettlement", in areas of Vojvodina and Slavonia inhabited by ethnic Hungarians, was clearly aimed at forcibly changing the ethnic composition of those territories. Homes whose inhabitants had been forced to flee had been occupied. The international community should take firm action to counter those violations, which might engender new refugee flows. The non-recognition of the validity of property transfers as a result of "ethnic cleansing" should be included in future remedies.

16. Hungary fully supported UNHCR's efforts to ensure effective preventive protection of refugees, and commended the results already achieved in Croatia and certain areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It would continue to contribute to the international community's efforts in assisting refugees.

17. Mr. MARUYAMA (Japan) expressed his Government's strong commitment to UNHCR, given that the unprecedented flow of refugees was crucial to international peace and security. Japan would continue to be a major donor to UNHCR and intended to cooperate with United Nations activities by providing both personnel and relief supplies, within the framework of recently adopted legislation.

18. In regard to the Indo-Chinese refugee problem, Japan granted first asylum to boat people and accepted Indo-Chinese refugees who wished to be resettled and were able to support themselves. Temporary asylum had been granted to 13,600 boat people and the right of permanent residence had been granted to nearly 8,500 Indo-Chinese refugees.

19. He welcomed the substantial progress made in voluntary repatriation in South-East Asia, South-West Asia and southern Africa, and was highly appreciative of UNHCR's role in that process. Recognizing that voluntary repatriation was the most desirable solution, it had made a substantial contribution to UNHCR programmes in those regions, with further contributions planned. Voluntary repatriation must be followed up by successful reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction. Since such matters lay outside UNHCR's competence, closer coordination was needed among concerned agencies, non-governmental organizations and Governments.

20. While commending UNHCR's relief operations, especially in the former Yugoslavia, and appreciating the massive scale of new refugee problems, he urged caution in expanding UNHCR's mandate beyond its traditional areas of activity in view of the Office's limited resources. The need for a more extensive sharing of roles with other humanitarian organizations should be explored. UNHCR, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and other humanitarian organizations were urged to continue to work together closely in order to respond in a coordinated and effective manner. In conclusion, he reaffirmed Japan's steadfast commitment to the humanitarian goals pursued by UNHCR.

/...

21. Mr. SARDENBERG (Brazil) said that the huge flows of refugees in many regions of the world had again highlighted the growing need for concerted international action to protect and assist asylum-seekers, especially in the Horn of Africa and Europe. The continued work of UNHCR was fully warranted in view of the dangers of intolerance and xenophobia. In addition to ensuring legal protection, UNHCR should promote a broader public understanding of the tragedy of refugees and their right to seek asylum abroad. Durable solutions, notably voluntary repatriation, should form part of the long-term approach.

22. Equally, the prevention of humanitarian crises was an important factor, encompassing virtually every item on the international agenda. A continuum between relief and development was a basic concern; economic development, through the attainment of higher living standards, enhanced the capacity to withstand hardship and to respond to external shocks without their generating outflows of refugees. The task of prevention therefore clearly extended far beyond the mandate of any individual United Nations agency. In the case of UNHCR, it was a matter of how to take prevention initiatives and yet simultaneously maintain its protection mandate and impartiality. His delegation believed that actual experience should stand as the criterion in each particular case, and concurred with the High Commissioner that presence on the ground often constituted prevention.

23. Recent international developments had demonstrated the crucial importance of securing the cooperation of all concerned parties with a view to providing safe access and prompt assistance to victims in emergency situations, where humanitarian norms were frequently eroded. Brazil was therefore committed to helping ensure that international humanitarian law was observed. Furthermore, it was clear from recent General Assembly resolutions that humanitarian action - by definition impartial and non-contingent on the solution of political problems - should remain entirely neutral. Similarly, the urgent task of ensuring safe and appropriate working conditions for relief workers, which required resolute action, could not be equated with promoting solutions to problems of conflict. However, political settlements were more likely to be achieved as a result of the greater trust which basic humane standards of behaviour tended to create. Finally, he stressed the responsibility of the international community to continue improving the effectiveness of the United Nations system, in which UNHCR was a major and unique element.

24. Mr. ADALA (Kenya) noted that, in view of new mass exoduses, the overall refugee situation in Africa had not improved. He voiced particular concern over the current havoc wrought in the Horn of Africa by civil strife and drought. No African host country was in a position to fulfil its moral obligation to cope with sudden heavy influxes of refugees; in Kenya, the number of refugees, excluding those not officially registered, was now 20 times greater than in 1989. Up to 1,000 new refugees arrived every day, often in an appalling condition. Most were accommodated in camps in arid areas with a poor infrastructure. Humanitarian operations were therefore costly, placing an additional strain on resources. Indeed, without the assistance of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, Kenya would have been unable to cope.

(Mr. Adala, Kenya)

25. He welcomed the new cross-mandate, cross-border operations to provide non-discriminatory assistance to refugees, returnees, displaced persons and affected local populations, which had helped to dispel any ill-feeling among the latter. In addition to relief delivery, emergency responses entailed balancing the interests of host States aand asylum-seekers, while the role of affected States in humanitarian assistance was as significant as that of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Kenya had provided such assistance to victims and facilitated the work of those organizations. Essentially man-made, the root causes of refugee problems had to be addressed; the situation of jeopardizing lives and subsequently asking for international humanitarian assistance could no longer be tolerated.

26. Mr. GOSHU (Ethiopia) said that in addition to the 1 million Somali and 17,000 Sudanese refugees his country was hosting, 450,000 Ethiopian refugees were returning from Somalia to escape the bloody civil conflict in that country. Coordinated efforts of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations had resulted in several life-saving operations being launched. The influx of Somali refugees and asylum-seekers had been large and sudden; a campaign had been undertaken to register them and persuade them to go to the refugee camps to receive assistance.

27. There were 10 million people in dire straits in his country, 8 million drought victims, displaced persons and demobilized soldiers. The task of providing assistance to those refugees was formidable and could not be accomplished by any single Government or agency.

28. Mr. VON DER LILIE (Austria) said that his Government continued to support the High Commissioner in her task to enhance the agency's performance capabilities and believed that the strategic three-point plan provided an appropriate approach to cope with the deteriorating situation in many parts of the globe. His Government considered that UNHCR's response capacity was currently the most efficient in the whole United Nations system. For the first time in the history of the Organization, the total volume of assistance would exceed $1 billion. Despite concerns about the proliferation of special programmes and apparent shortcomings in coordination, his Government encouraged UNHCR to continue its programmes using innovative approaches such as cross-border and cross-mandate operations. He noted that the main activities of the Office seemed to be shifting from its traditional role of protecting individual refugees towards providing humanitarian assistance to entire populations of people on the move. His Government welcomed that development but also stressed the importance of enhancing the concept of refugee rights and duties.

29. The increased focus on women and children, who constituted 80 per cent of the world refugee population, was commendable. His Government, mindful of the importance of voluntary repatriation, had contributed to a number of repatriation operations; however, prevention was preferable. It was the responsibility of countries of origin to ensure the political, legal and

/...

(Mr. Von Der Lilie, Austria)

economic well-being of their nationals. As human rights violations were an important cause of refugee movements, his delegation encouraged the Office to pursue its increasingly close cooperation with the Commission on Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights, in particular in preparation for the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights.

30. In order to ensure the functioning of the asylum system, a clear distinction should be made, both nationally and internationally, between migrants and refugees. UNHCR should continue to cooperate with receiving countries with a view to strengthening the asylum system.

31. It was regrettable that the refugee situation in the former Yugoslavia, which the High Commissioner had qualified as the most serious in Europe since the Second World War, did not figure more prominently in her report. The armed conflict was causing untold suffering and more than 3 million people had been displaced. Tens of thousands faced indiscriminate ill-treatment and even summary executions. The delivery of assistance was hampered by a serious lack of security.

32. His delegation appealed to the members of the Steering Committee of the London Conference to intensify action in the political field so as to enable UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and non-governmental organizations to obtain unhindered access to the civilian victims of the conflict. He expressed his delegation's deep appreciation to the High Commissioner for having convened the International Meeting on Humanitarian Aid for Victims of the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia in July and for having proposed the Comprehensive Response to the Humanitarian Crisis.

33. Temporary protection was a key element of response, and was being applied to over 60,000 displaced persons from Bosnia and Herzegovina in his country. The setting of regional guidelines for temporary protection, including a system of equitable burden-sharing, would help to accelerate resettlement.

34. Regarding the question of detainees, it was deplorable that none of the parties to the conflict had provided ICRC with a complete list of places of detention and the names of those detained. His country had agreed to accept an additional 200 refugees and had provided funds in excess of $100 million for an extensive programme of humanitarian assistance.

35. Since the United Nations could not solve all problems alone, a pooling of resources and an efficient division of labour coupled with measures to further self-reliance was indispensable and should make up the primary task of the new Department of Humanitarian Affairs. A certain streamlining of its activities was called for. His delegation wished to echo the appeal made by the President of the International Fact-Finding Commission, established under article 90 of Protocol I Additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, to accept the Commission's competence to inquire into allegations of serious violations of the Conventions and Protocol; it also supported the ICRC initiative to convene a conference to reaffirm respect for the 1949 Geneva Conventions.

/...

36. Mr. BULL (Liberia) said that it was estimated that 50 per cent of the world's 18 million refugees were children, and it was therefore imperative that programmes should be implemented to provide for their development. Comprehensive programmes for refugee women were also needed. His delegation urged the international community to support the new initiatives outlined in the report of UNHCR for those two groups.

37. The African continent held the largest concentration of refugees, while the host countries were among the least developed in the world and lacked resources to meet their own national needs. Regrettably, the international community had not responded in Africa with the spontaneity and support accorded other regions of the world. Much remained to be done by the new Department of Humanitarian Affairs in implementing a coordinated approach. Implementation by Member States of the proposals outlined in the Secretary-General's report on humanitarian questions (A/47/540) would greatly enhance the Organization's ability to provide humanitarian assistance. In his delegation's view, the United Nations had a moral obligation to respond to emergencies whenever they occurred without fear or favour. The preservation of human life must become an overriding concern of the international community and should be made obligatory on the part of all Member States. The innovative approach of establishing relief corridors in emergency zones also deserved full acceptance by all Member States.

38. Regarding the situation of Liberian refugees and displaced persons, the human tragedy had been exacerbated by the resumption of armed hostilities. The war had resulted in the death of thousands of civilians and forced more than 665,000 Liberians to remain refugees in neighbouring countries and several hundred thousand to be internally displaced. The crisis in his country had seriously affected the entire subregion. His delegation renewed its request to Member States to support the United Nations appeal for additional assistance to meet the emergency in Liberia. Despite commendable strides in alleviating the suffering and meeting the needs of refugees on the part of the United Nations system, the yearly increase in the world's refugee population was a reminder of the need for concerted international action to address the root causes.

39. Mr. AHMED (India) said that, in future, there were likely to be increasing numbers of asylum-seekers fleeing from conflict or because their basic economic and social rights were denied. In order to contain the problem, peace and security must be restored and human rights must be respected in the countries of origin. Economic disparities must be eliminated through development.

40. The increase in terrorism and subversion also caused refugee flows. All States had a responsibility to refrain from supporting cross-border terrorist activities that might lead to such flows. India viewed voluntary repatriation as the lasting solution to the refugee problem and had adhered to that principle with regard to refugees in its own territory. The principle should be scrupulously upheld and no State should disregard it to meet its short-term needs.

/...

(Mr. Ahmed, India)

41. The plight of the refugees in the former Yugoslavia was a matter for profound concern. Hundreds of thousands of persons had been displaced from their homes because of the conflict. India was outraged at the tragic events taking place in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and strongly condemned the criminal attacks against innocent civilians. The critical situation of the population required an urgent response by the international community. His Government appreciated the steps taken by UNHCR in assisting the victims of "ethnic cleansing" and supported the Office's stepped-up activities in the former Yugoslavia.

42. Resources were desperately needed to address refugee situations elsewhere in the world. The disaster in Somalia and refugee flows in other parts of Africa and in Asia should be dealt with urgently. India had received refugees from Sri Lanka and Afghanistan and expressed satisfaction with the assistance provided by UNHCR in repatriating refugees willing to return to Sri Lanka. Lastly, he expressed the hope that the international community would provide the Office with the resources to enable it to carry out its mandate.

43. Ms. STRÖM (Sweden) said that in spite of the refugee problem in Europe, particularly in the former Yugoslavia, the vast majority of the world's refugees were still in the third world and the major refugee-receiving countries were among the poorest. UNHCR should consider possible preventive action to avert massive flows, as well as programmes in the countries of origin to facilitate voluntary repatriation. Humanitarian diplomacy was an aspect of preventive protection; and special attention should be paid to the relationship between human rights violations and refugee crises.

44. States had the responsibility to promote respect for human rights and democratic institutions. In that context, the Office had an important role to play in the preparations for the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights. Its efforts to promote accession to the relevant international legal instruments were also very important. Accession to the conventions on statelessness should be carefully considered by States that were not parties to those instruments. Since most of the world's refugees were women and children, there was a need for universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which provided an important framework to meet the special needs of children.

45. It was widely recognized that the Office's mandate extended to persons forced to leave their countries because of armed conflict, civil disorder or violence. There were also situations where the Secretary-General or the General Assembly could call on UNHCR to provide humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons. The Office should obviously respond to those requests.

46. The responsibility of the entire United Nations system with regard to humanitarian emergency assistance was laid down in General Assembly resolution 46/182. UNHCR, with its long experience, should play a major role in efforts to enhance cooperation and coordination among all relevant United Nations

(Ms. Ström, Sweden)

agencies in addressing emergency situations. An effective response must be based on a clear division of responsibilities among the relevant United Nations bodies and other organizations involved.

47. UNHCR had a long tradition of cooperation with non-governmental organizations, which could play a key role in emergency situations as implementing partners for the United Nations. Sweden commended that type of partnership and thought that other United Nations agencies could learn from UNHCR. Together with other countries, Sweden had tried to respond to the needs of UNHCR and over the years had steadily increased its contributions. Today it was vital to stress the need for burden-sharing among donors; it was no longer realistic to expect a few countries to assume most of the burden. Furthermore, the High Commissioner must have the necessary flexibility in allocating funds in order to respond to new situations.

48. In recent years there had been an upsurge in chauvinism, xenophobia, racism and anti-semitism. Efforts to combat those phenomena should include the elaboration of national and international legal instruments as well as information campaigns. Lastly, she expressed her Government's full support for the work of UNHCR in meeting the enormous challenges facing it.

49. Mr. BARUTWANAYO (Burundi) said that the refugee problem was a priority issue for the international community. The grave violations of human rights in various parts of the world must be dealt with urgently. However, there were better possibilities today of averting new flows of refugees and eliminating the root causes through democratization and respect for human rights.

50. Burundi had undergone tragic situations caused by ethnic divisions that had led to loss of human life and large-scale flows of refugees who had found asylum in neighbouring countries and elsewhere. For the past four years, however, his country had been engaged in a process of national reconciliation, which had resulted in the adoption of the Charter of National Unity.

51. His Government had established a national commission to reintegrate all refugees wishing to return and provide them with land, employment and health care. More than 30,000 refugees had already returned and others were on their way. Consultations had been conducted with the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania and UNHCR in order to organize their voluntary repatriation. Since that required extensive resources, his Government had sought assistance from friendly countries and international organizations. It wished to thank the countries and organizations involved, particularly the United Republic of Tanzania. Lastly, he commended the work carried out by UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and called upon the international community to lighten the burden of host countries.

/...

52. Mr. GALAL (Egypt) said that the continually worsening refugee situation, which his delegation had followed with concern, confirmed the serious challenges entailed in assisting refugees. He commended UNHCR's three-point strategy, as well as the High Commissioner's valuable proposals on protection. The effectiveness of the United Nations in eliminating the causes of the problem relied on cooperation, although all existing structures should be used before creating any new early-warning mechanisms. His delegation supported the cooperation between UNHCR and the Commission on Human Rights designed to curtail human rights violations and thereby prevent further refugee flows.

53. The conventional concept of refugees and persons needing protection should be less rigidly defined in order to assist the international community in alleviating suffering caused by natural disaster. The Refugee Convention of the Organization of African Unity could, for example, be used as a guideline in providing that broader definition, which, as recent events in the former Yugoslavia had shown, was urgently required.

54. As to the treatment of the problem, he commended UNHCR's collaboration with other United Nations agencies. In the search for a durable solution, the international community should tackle the economic, political, social and humanitarian causes through integrated action. His country, for its part, was committed to supporting UNHCR and all other organizations engaged in providing humanitarian assistance.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly
FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION
Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
39th meeting
held on
Friday, 13 November 1992
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 39th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. DEKANY (Vice-Chairman) (Hungary)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 96: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (*continued*)

(a) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (*continued*)

(b) QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS (*continued*)

(c) HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/47/SR.39
4 December 1992
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

In the absence of Mr. Krenkel (Austria), Mr. Dekany (Hungary), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 96: REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (continued)

(b) QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES, RETURNEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS (continued)

(c) HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS (continued) (A/47/12 and Add.1, A/47/91-S/23585, A/47/131, A/47/178, A/47/280, A/47/296, A/47/351-S/24357, A/47/352, A/47/364, A/47/365, A/47/391, A/47/420-S/24519, A/47/455-S/24571, A/47/529 and Corr.1, A/47/540, A/47/564, A/47/569 and A/47/638-S/24772)

1. Mr. CRAPATUREANU (Romania) said that, despite the efforts that had been made, the global refugee situation had again deteriorated. The existence of 18 million refugees was totally incompatible with the fundamental goals of the international community. Romania supported the activity of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other United Nations agencies and welcomed the adoption of resolution 46/182 on strengthening the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance.

2. After the fundamental changes that had taken place in eastern Europe, a new situation had emerged affecting the refugee problem at the regional level. After the collapse of communism and the Iron Curtain, the number of persons travelling west had increased at least 10 times. His delegation considered that, in accordance with the provisions of the 1951 Geneva Convention, a clear distinction should be made between refugees and other categories of migrants and asylum-seekers. It also considered that excessive use and misuse of asylum procedures could undermine the refugee institution itself.

3. During the communist period, Romania had been a source of emigrants, but after 1990, the Romanian authorities had had to establish a new legal and institutional framework. The first step had been to establish the Romanian Committee for Migrations, whose main tasks were to apply the international legal instruments and to promote domestic legislation, to take measures to reduce the flow of illegal immigrants, reintegrate returnees, etc. Secondly, a law had been submitted on the status of refugees and had been sent to the Parliament for adoption. In addition, an office of the International Organization for Migration had been opened in Bucharest and, after Romania's accession to the 1951 Convention, an office of UNHCR.

/...

(Mr. Crapatureanu, Romania)

4. Romania had signed agreements with Austria, Germany and Hungary for the repatriation of citizens with illegal status in those countries. He also noted that an inter-ministerial agreement had been signed between Germany and Romania to help repatriated persons receive training in special units. In spite of its lack of experience, Romania had provided humanitarian assistance to the foreigners who applied for asylum, the majority being Somalis and Kurds, and had started a programme, together with UNHCR and the Romanian Red Cross, to offer scholarships and training to those refugees.

5. Mr. KOUYATE (Guinea) said that the changes which had taken place in the world had not opened up the prospects for refugees that had been anticipated. The fact that there were 17 million persons living outside their own countries highlighted the need for innovative approaches. A global strategy must be worked out to prevent and eradicate the main causes of mass migrations: wars and human rights violations.

6. There were, however, other factors: extreme poverty, the consequences of structural adjustment, the debt burden and the fragility of economic systems and institutions, as well as environmental degradation, drought, famine and natural catastrophes. The African countries suffered from all of those, in varying degrees. Accordingly, in 1992, the African Economic Community had been established at Abuja to promote sustainable economic development, through regional and subregional cooperation and integration.

7. Guinea had taken in about 600,000 refugees and resettled them in one of the least developed regions of the country. That mass invasion, so to speak, had caused serious damage, since trees had had to be cut down to provide cultivable land, with adverse effects on water resources. The villages were suffering from serious food shortages because of the drastic increase in population. The Government of Guinea and UNHCR had attempted to launch repatriation operations but had found that, after each operation, those who left for Monrovia did not return and those who went to other provinces came back accompanied by other persons seeking asylum.

8. He praised the efforts of the UNHCR representatives in Guinea. Its cooperation with the Government had made it possible to overcome the difficulties caused by the overwhelming numbers of refugees in poor areas. He also urged the international community to provide assistance for the thousands of persons exposed to disease and lack of hygiene, made worse by the absence of infrastructure and school equipment.

9. Lastly, he expressed the hope that there would soon be positive developments in the situation in Liberia, making it possible to reverse the flow of refugees between that country and the countries of asylum, restore peace and security and return to normal political life. Guinea, which had ratified the Geneva Convention and its Protocol, would take part in that process in accordance with its policy of non-interference, good-neighbourliness and African solidarity.

/...

10. Mr. TROTTIER (Canada) said that Governments, international institutions and non-governmental organizations had to adjust to an evolving geopolitical environment. The United Nations had created the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the new centre for coordination of humanitarian relief, to ensure that all operational agencies were accountable for the effective resolution of the problems plaguing displaced populations.

11. As a result of the horrors taking place in many parts of the world, Canada had had to provide massive humanitarian relief, but the world community as a whole must come to the aid of refugee populations. UNHCR had responded with dedication and innovation, but with massive operations under way, as in Yugoslavia, Cambodia, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa, the question arose whether it should be asked to take the lead in each case.

12. Canada was aware of the uncertainties that confronted humanitarian relief operations, as well as of the management difficulties for an organization that depended so heavily on responses to special funding appeals. Donors and UNHCR must find a solution to the financial insecurity; only then would the Executive Committee be in a position to be sure that the right priorities were given the right resources. The Canadian International Development Agency had recently offered the services of an independent consultant to undertake a strategic-management review of UNHCR.

13. He wished to pay a tribute to the United Nations and NGO workers who had risked their lives in the performance of their duty, as well as to the soldiers of the United Nations peace-keeping forces who had supported their efforts. Among those who had fallen was a member of the Canadian armed forces, Sgt. Michael Ralph.

14. Canada was a pluralistic country, and therefore found the practice of "ethnic cleansing" to be repugnant and entirely unacceptable. Canada was participating in the United Nations efforts to create conditions that would allow for the return of security, and was providing humanitarian assistance which totalled more than $25 million, in addition to a peace-keeping contingent that would soon number 2,400 men. In response to the High Commissioner's appeal for the protection of former Yugoslavs, Canada had announced special immigration measures for some of the persons concerned, and some 26,000 individuals were expected to be granted asylum in Canada over the next two years.

15. Canada was also contributing to the international efforts to bring humanitarian relief to the Somali people, who were being ravaged by civil war, drought and famine. To date, Canada had provided more than $20 million in humanitarian relief; Canadian aircraft were participating in the airlift into the interior of Somalia, and a contingent of 750 peace-keepers would soon be dispatched to that country. Canada was also participating in efforts to provide protection for refugees through family reunification for Somalis who had close relatives in Canada, or by providing resettlement opportunities in Canada for individual Somalis who could not benefit from other solutions.

/...

(Mr. Trottier, Canada)

16. Canada supported the 100-day programme of action for accelerated humanitarian assistance for Somalia which was drawn up at the meeting held in Geneva on 12 and 13 October. In that connection, his delegation regretted the resignation of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, Ambassador Sahnoun, and hoped the plan would not suffer any set-backs as a result of that loss.

17. The efforts of the Government of Canada to assist refugees enjoyed the broad support of the population. To maintain that support, however, the policies and programmes for refugees must be firmly based on real needs, and resources must be used rationally. The demands of persons arriving in the nations of the industrialized world seeking protection tested the institutions and collective tolerance of those countries. The time had come to recognize that the world-wide movement of persons was of such magnitude that new and comprehensive approaches must be developed. Canada, which had always been a country of immigration, realized that it was essential to ensure that the admission of refugees rested on a sound legal basis and that strategies to help them to adapt to their new countries were in place. It was equally important to promote tolerance and understanding in the receiving societies.

18. Mr. RATA (New Zealand) said that the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees deserved high praise for its efforts at a time when humanitarian assistance often became impossible as a result of continually increasing needs in situations of rising complexity and danger.

19. New Zealand was disturbed by the contempt which many protagonists in recent conflicts seemed to have for the basic rules of international humanitarian law. The former Yugoslavia was a tragic example. New Zealand had offered asylum to 50 Bosnians who had survived the horror of the detention camps and escaped the abhorrent practice of "ethnic cleansing". His Government strongly believed that those guilty of war crimes should be held accountable for their actions.

20. In Somalia, the uncertain security situation meant that relief was not reaching those who needed it most, and was causing people to flee not only the conflict but the prospect of starvation. His delegation commended the surrounding countries for the sacrifices they were making to assist those refugees.

21. His delegation was pleased to note that over 1.5 million refugees world wide had returned to their homes in 1992, and welcomed the news that around 370,000 Cambodians would have returned home under UNHCR auspices in time for the elections in May 1993. New Zealand was assisting with the rebuilding of Cambodia. In the case of Viet Nam, there had been a phenomenal decline in clandestine departures; his delegation hoped that voluntary repatriation within the framework of the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indo-Chinese Refugees would continue.

/...

(Mr. Rata, New Zealand)

22. The voluntary return of refugees in safety and dignity to their countries was the most desirable solution, although it was not always feasible. Often the country of first asylum was itself poor and lacked the capacity to absorb new arrivals. Resettlement elsewhere might sometimes be the only solution. More than half the refugees accepted in New Zealand under its quota system came from Indo-China. However, in view of the positive developments and the unpredictability of refugee movements, his country had responded to the call by UNHCR, and had set aside a large portion of the quota for cases of protection of refugees of unassigned nationality.

23. New Zealand would once again offer asylum to disabled persons and women at risk, and supported the priority which the Office of the High Commissioner was giving to implementation of the Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women. It was appropriate that a Senior Coordinator for Refugee Children should be appointed to complement the work already being done by the Senior Coordinator on Refugee Women.

24. Mr. DUONG CHI DUNG (Viet Nam) said that the world's refugee population, including asylum-seekers, displaced persons and returnees, amounted to 40 million; that, together with the scale, complexity and diversity of the problem, pointed to the gravity of the situation. Viet Nam agreed with the High Commissioner that, despite progress in certain regions, including South-East Asia, the past year had been one of the most difficult and demanding for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), had placed additional and considerable demands on the solidarity of the international community, and had posed daunting challenges to UNHCR and the United Nations system as a whole (A/47/12, para. 1). In that context, he noted with appreciation the implementation of a three-pronged strategy involving improving preparation and response mechanisms in emergencies, seeking lasting solutions, notably through voluntary repatriation, and adopting innovative approaches in the field of prevention.

25. As many speakers had indicated, there were major causes of outflows other than political suppression and human rights violations. Every day millions of people fled their countries in search of a better material life. While underdevelopment, poverty, wars and conflicts were major causes of those outflows, the durable solution to the problem was not only to bring about peace and reconciliation but also to ensure development and prosperity in the regions or countries concerned, a task which called for coordinated action by the United Nations system and the international community.

26. It was noteworthy that at the forty-second session of the Executive Committee, the High Commissioner had been encouraged "to continue with her advocacy of greater inter-agency cooperation and in particular to undertake, with the UNDP Administrator, steps to bring to fruition joint activities in development fields aimed at benefiting refugees, returnees, displaced persons and their host communities" (A/47/12, para. 61).

/...

(Mr. Duong Chi Dung, Viet Nam)

27. Owing to the contant efforts and firm measures of the Government of Viet Nam, assisted by UNHCR and the international community, progress had been made in implementing the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA), adopted at the International Conference on Indo-Chinese Refugees. There had been a noticeable decrease in the number of clandestine departures; the Orderly Departure Programme had been expanded; and the number of Vietnamese seeking asylum in Hong Kong and the countries of South-East Asia had decreased steadily. While voluntary repatriation and repatriation of those not opposed to returning had increased during the same period, that enterprise had to be accompanied by development assistance ensuring adequate living conditions for the returnees and the communities involved. In that connection, Viet Nam appreciated the help of the European Community as well as other governmental and non-governmental organizations in implementing the Comprehensive Plan of Action.

28. Mr. KHOMAN (Thailand) said that the problem of refugees in South-East Asia was a consequence of the Vietnamese war fiasco. The victors in that ignominious war had conceived of what might be called the precursor of the Serbian "ethnic cleansing", since the communist regime and its allies had driven out the Chinese population not only for lucrative gains but also for political purposes.

29. The refugee flow had increased after the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia to such a large extent that the Thai Government had been unable to cope with it. In spite of that, western Governments had devised the term "first asylum", a machiavellian device which had assuaged their consciences, freed them from all responsibility and placed the burden on the shoulders of poor and underdeveloped countries like Thailand. Particularly disgraceful was the fact that the theory had no longer applied when the Haitians began landing on the Florida coast, since at that point the authorities had advanced the distinction between political and economic refugees, an ingenious notion invented by the British. President-elect Bill Clinton, who should be commended for his fairness and political honesty, had recognized that ploy as an "error".

30. To maintain an image of moral virtue and responsibility, those western countries had pledged to admit some refugees but, naturally, on particular conditions. After a rigorous screening, they accepted the able-bodied only, leaving the sick, young and old to the care of countries in the vicinity of the conflict. Owing to United Nations efforts, humanitarian assistance from several States and the cooperation of certain Cambodian factions, the refugee situation in South-East Asia was less acute. Implementation of the Paris peace agreement was in its second phase, a period which would require greater determination from all parties in order to bring lasting peace to Cambodia. The Government of Thailand, the Supreme National Council of Cambodia and UNHCR had signed a tripartite memorandum of understanding which ensured that there would be no residual refugee cases remaining in Thailand. The Cambodian repatriation operation had progressed satisfactorily and it was to be hoped

/...

(Mr. Khoman, Thailand)

that it would be completed by early 1993 so that all Cambodians might participate in the Cambodian general election in May of that year. In that connection, the generous contribution of the Japanese Government and the valuable efforts of the United Nations and the international community were noteworthy.

31. Nevertheless, having begun the repatriation process, the international community must not be oblivious to the importance of contributing to the well-being of returnees and to their adequate reintegration into society, in order to ensure a lasting peace in Cambodia.

32. Implementation of a plan for phased repatriation and reintegration of Lao refugees from Thailand, agreed upon in 1991 by the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand and UNHCR, had facilitated the voluntary return of many Laotians to their country. That plan also required support from the international community in order to increase the Republic's capacity to absorb returnees.

33. Thailand wished to point out that, while progress had been made under the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA), the parties concerned should explore new mechanisms and modalities to speed up the repatriation of persons not considered refugees, in accordance with international practice and, to that end, it urged UNHCR to convene the CPA Steering Committee.

34. Mrs. JAHAN (Bangladesh) said that, while the end of the cold war had brought with it much progress and many new opportunities, giving rise to a sense of euphoria, it had also resulted in serious problems, such as that of refugee populations, which could threaten international political stability.

35. The enormous flow of refugees not only endangered political relations between States but also imposed severe economic burdens on host countries. Escalating ethnic and civil violence, which took its greatest toll on thousands of innocent people, could be contained only through concerted action by the international community which ensured, inter alia, that emergency humanitarian assistance reached its destination.

36. Until recently, ideological disputes between nations had hindered any solution to, or had exacerbated, the refugee problem in Asia, Africa and Latin America and, while it had facilitated the search for solutions and had given rise to some progress, as in the case of Afghan and Cambodian refugees, the new international climate had also contributed to the emergence of new conflicts in eastern and central Europe. It was vital to reverse those trends and to place greater stress on prevention.

37. The refugee issue was of particular significance to Bangladesh, which had welcomed more than 265,000 refugees from Myanmar. Despite its meagre resources, it had been able, with the help of the international community, to meet the immediate demands arising from that situation.

/...

(Mrs. Jahan, Bangladesh)

38. An indefinite stay of the refugees in Bangladesh would only heighten tensions and increase competition with the local population for scarce resources, which could give rise to conflict. Bangladesh and Myanmar had accordingly decided to settle the question peacefully in a spirit of friendship and good neighbourliness and had signed an agreement by which Myanmar had agreed to guarantee return of the refugees and to ensure a secure and dignified future for them. Although the process had been slow, it was to be hoped that it marked the beginning of voluntary repatriation of the remaining refugees and, in that connection, the impartial presence of the United Nations was essential.

39. Bangladesh was aware of the enormous responsibility carried by UNHCR and the importance of providing it with the funds necessary to fulfil its mandate. It therefore called upon the international community to strengthen its cooperation with UNHCR and to combat the root causes of those problems so that such situations did not recur.

40. Mr. KASOULIDES (Cyprus) said that, as one of the beneficiaries of UNHCR's humanitarian assistance, Cyprus was very much aware of the need to guarantee protection and assistance to the 17 million refugees as well as to displaced persons throughout the world.

41. In Europe, the problem of refugees and displaced persons, which was largely attributable to the dissolution of the eastern European States and to the destructive trends of militant ethnic fervour and nationalism, was approaching epidemic proportions and rivalled conditions in Africa and Asia.

42. Cyprus, itself a victim of the abhorrent practice of "ethnic cleansing" had supported the Committee resolution condemning that practice as a gross violation of international humanitarian law, and believed that positive political developments could help to solve the problem of refugees and allow them to return to their homes in safety.

43. As prevention was the most suitable means of addressing the overall problem, a better understanding of the root causes of mass exoduses was necessary in order to help the High Commissioner expand the preventive functions of her Office, and to strengthen the United Nations mechanisms and procedures for determining conflicts, negotiating solutions to international conflicts and improving the human rights situation. Prevention of the refugee problem also required States to fulfil their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, respect the human rights of their own citizens and refrain from the threat or use of force against other States.

44. Cyprus supported the new Emergency Preparedness and Response Mechanism; the institution of five Emergency Response Teams; the stockpiling of food reserves; the adoption of procedures for rapid deployment of personnel and resources and the creation of an early-warning system for possible refugee migrations. Cyprus also supported an integrated approach which included the

(Mr. Kasoulides, Cyprus)

participation of development agencies, and linked refugee assistance and development aid.

45. Voluntary repatriation was the ideal solution to the problem, although it depended on acceptable economic and political conditions, as well as safety, in the countries of origin. Moreover, voluntary repatriation inevitably meant increased funds. It was gratifying that for the first time contributions made to UNHCR in 1991 had enabled it to respond to emergencies and to implement large-scale repatriation programmes without financial constraints. Nevertheless, it was necessary to seek further resources in order to boost the capacity of poor developing countries to offer hundreds of thousands of refugees asylum and resettlement.

46. Recent history had demonstrated the need to revise the definition of the term "refugee". The 1951 Convention defined a refugee as a person compelled to leave his country on account of external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order. However, it was necessary to bear in mind that individuals also fled from poverty, ecological disaster and lack of development.

47. The United Nations should address more closely the issue of internally displaced persons, who were forced to become refugees in their own countries and who, as a result, remained outside the protection of the 1951 Convention. In that context, his delegation pointed out that it was inadmissible for national sovereignty to be used as an excuse for preventing displaced persons from receiving international assistance. In order to address the problem of displaced persons, it would be useful to distinguish between persons who were "internally" displaced because of internal developments within a country and "externally" displaced persons, i.e. people forcibly expelled from where they lived by foreign occupation or invasion.

48. Hundreds of thousands of Cypriots belonged to that latter category. During the invasion and subsequent occupation of 37 per cent of the territory of Cyprus, about one third of the population had been compelled to leave their homes and to move to areas controlled by the current Government. That was a manifest violation of international humanitarian law and more specifically of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Eighteen years later, the occupation forces were still present in Cyprus and much of the land in the occupied part had been given to settlers illegally imported in large numbers from Turkey in an effort to change the demographic structure of the occupied territory.

49. That situation had been confirmed by the fact-finding mission sent to Cyprus by the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Demography of the Council of Europe and had also been condemned by the European Commission of Human Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

50. In order to assist the Secretary-General in solving the problem of Cyprus, the Government had accepted the suggestion to conduct a census to

(Mr. Kasoulides, Cyprus)

determine living conditions in all regions, the number of people living in Cyprus and where they came from. Unfortunately, the Turkish Cypriot side had rejected that initiative.

51. Cyprus was grateful to the Secretary-General for persevering in his efforts and for continuing to maintain a special mission of UNHCR in Cyprus to coordinate international assistance. It was also grateful to the international community, to donor countries and to UNHCR and hoped that the good offices mission entrusted to the Secretary-General by the Security Council would result in a just and lasting solution to the problem of Cyprus.

52. Mr. SHOOGUFAN (Afghanistan) supported and commended the continued efforts of UNHCR and other humanitarian bodies towards providing assistance to refugees and displaced persons and towards seeking durable solutions.

53. In Afghanistan, 14 years of war had forced one third of the population to seek refuge in neighbouring countries and 2 million people to leave their homes and settle in other parts of the country. The end of the war and the political changes initiated in 1992 had established conditions suitable for the repatriation of Afghan refugees to begin and for displaced persons to return to their homes. Over one million refugees had already returned to their towns and villages, and despite many obstacles, particularly the presence of ten million mines all over the country, massive repatriation was expected to take place as from March 1993.

54. In order to facilitate the massive return and resettlement of the refugees the following requirements had to be met: continuation of the financial and technical arrangements agreed upon by UNHCR, other assistance agencies and the neighbouring countries in support of refugee programmes, such as tranportation programmes to repatriate persons from places a long way from Afghanistan; the provision of material assistance to communities and the preparation of stocks of food, blankets, fuel for stoves and essential health items; the implementation of rehabilitation and development projects designed to generate economic activities in places to which people returned; mine clearance throughout the country's territory, as the problem had hitherto not been adequately addressed and was a real hurdle to voluntary repatriation.

55. The recently established Tripartite Repatriation Commission, consisting of UNHCR and the Governments of Afghanistan and Iran, and a similar commission to be established with UNHCR and Pakistan would make it possible to improve refugee protection and repatriation.

56. Afghanistan wished to express its profound gratitude to UNHCR, Iran, Pakistan and all the Member States and international bodies for their generous assistance to Afghan refugees and displaced persons, and it called upon the international community to support the Government of Afghanistan in its labour of repatriation, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

57. Archbishop MARTINO (Observer for the Holy See) said that the problem of refugees and displaced persons seemed to be constantly increasing in magnitude and complexity. The Holy See wished to pay tribute to UNHCR for its efforts in providing international protection to refugees and in seeking durable solutions to their problems. The High Commissioner's three-pronged strategy of prevention, preparedness and solutions deserved to be energetically pursued.

58. For its part, the Holy See continued to inspire and support a wide range of activities and programmes through the local churches, and it was doing everything possible to promote international solidarity. For example, it had published a document on the refugee issue aimed at focusing international attention on one of the major causes of mass exoduses: violation of human rights with impunity.

59. The definition of "refugee" given by the 1951 Convention should be revised to include victims of erroneous economic policies and natural disasters. However, those who emigrated to improve their financial or social position should not be considered refugees and should be treated differently from those who fled economic conditions that threatened their physical safety.

60. With respect to refugee assistance, people displaced within their own countries had the right to the same consideration as refugees. Moreover, refugees receiving international assistance were not passive objects, but subjects capable of producing and creating; and respect for the rights and dignity of refugees was essential to preventing their tragic situation from being used for political purposes.

61. The Holy See called for international solidarity and generosity and appealed to all people of good will to assist in alleviating and solving the problem of refugees.

62. Mr. RANASINGHE (Sri Lanka) said that, although the end of the cold war had had a positive impact on the situation of refugees around the world, new migration problems had arisen. The root causes were internal and external conflicts, natural and environmental disasters, persecution, deprivation, hunger and poverty. Furthermore, the response to the problems of displaced persons was being complicated by obvious manifestations of racism and xenophobia, which were not confined to any geographical or economic region of the world.

63. He praised the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and her staff in fulfilling their mandate, sometimes at the risk of their own lives, in crisis situations in which the distinction between political and humanitarian issues was not clear. That dilemma highlighted the fact that the strength of UNHCR undoubtedly lay in its neutral, non-political character, which ensured that it would provide protection and seek durable solutions that would dove-tail with domestic political solutions and the national development effort. His delegation endorsed the High Commissioner's forward-looking,

/...

(Mr. Ranasinghe, Sri Lanka)

three-pronged strategy for dealing with the causes of the displacement of persons, which the international community would soon have to address.

64. At the invitation of the Government of Sri Lanka, UNHCR had participated in the provision of humanitarian assistance to Sri Lankans displaced by terrorist violence in the northern and eastern parts of the country. It was implementing pragmatic, flexible provisions through the establishment of Open Relief Centres in the affected areas. Cooperative arrangements had been developed among the Government, UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross and local and international non-governmental organizations in order to provide effective, essential services to displaced persons. That humanitarian programme's delivery, funded by the Government of Sri Lanka at a cost of $5 million and involving the distribution of around 10,000 tons of relief supplies per month, was a testimony to both the innovative capacity of UNHCR and the dedication of its staff. The Government of Sri Lanka wished to thank the donor Governments for their generosity, which had been crucial to the success of that operation.

65. UNHCR was also participating in the implementation of bilateral arrangements between Sri Lanka and India aimed at ensuring the voluntary return of displaced Sri Lankan nationals living in South India. The objective was to resettle the returnees in their original places of residence in areas where the Government had restored normal conditions. The programme included a settling-in allowance, an enterprise grant, a housing grant and a quota for consumption.

66. The Government of Sri Lanka was continuing its efforts to find a political solution to the problems in the north and east with the participation of all the democratic political parties of all the country's communities. The objective was to persuade those engaged in terrorist violence to participate in the political process and face democratic elections. A political solution worked out through the negotiating mechanism established by the elected Parliament of Sri Lanka and, combined with economic development, remained the only means of eliminating the causes of displacement.

67. Mr. RAMISHVILI (Russian Federation) said that it was important to acknowledge the efforts made by the international humanitarian relief organizations to deal with today's vast, complex problems despite their considerable financial difficulties.

68. Europe had until very recently been the most stable region in the world. Today its problems with refugees had joined the long-standing refugee problems of Africa, Central America and South-East Asia. Unfortunately, the resurgence of nationalism, long suppressed by force and now given free rein, was not always a peaceful phenomenon. The Russian Federation had not escaped the problem of refugees and displaced persons. Inter-ethnic conflicts in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia

/...

(Mr. Ramishvili, Russian Federation)

and other republics of the former Soviet Union had forced more than 400,000 people to flee to the Russian Federation. Their numbers would very likely be swelled by tens of thousands of Russian nationals in neighbouring countries who were being denied citizenship. Furthermore, within the Russian Federation itself, there were around 700,000 people who, for one reason or another, had been displaced from their place of origin.

69. Refugee protection was a new problem for Russia. A few months previously, the Federal Migration Office had been established, and provisional decrees had been approved regulating the status of refugees and displaced persons. Despite its well-known economic difficulties, the Government of the Russian Federation had allocated 3 billion roubles for that purpose. But more was needed.

70. Since the emergence of the new Russian State, close cooperation had been established with the international humanitarian organizations. During the current year, agreements had been signed with UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which were already represented in Moscow. Under those agreements, Russia would be able to draw on international experience in organizing activities related to refugees and displaced persons and would be receiving advice and technical support for the training of personnel and the formulation of draft legislation and national programmes in that field, and for seeking practical solutions to humanitarian issues, including illegal immigration.

71. The Russian Federation lacked legal instruments on the subject. The Parliament was considering a number of draft laws on refugees and migrants, drawn up with the participation of UNHCR experts and international specialists. The President of the Russian Federation had proposed to the Supreme Council the Russian Federation's accession to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol thereto, subject to parliamentary approval.

72. His delegation was of the view that there were certain problems that should not be neglected by the international humanitarian organizations, even if they did not fall strictly within their mandate. A case in point was that of the Afghan refugees. Despite progress in the repatriation of Afghans, the continuing military activity in Afghanistan had led to a massive exodus of Afghans from the capital to other parts of the country and abroad. Some 20,000 Afghans had settled in the Russian Federation. In the programme for Afghanistan, account should be taken of that aspect of the problem, especially since most of those persons wished to move to a third country.

73. The Russian Federation would welcome a study by UNHCR, IOM, the Department headed by Mr. Eliasson, ICRC and other relevant organizations of the regions in which refugee flows might occur, so as to develop a set of measures to prevent refugee flows or at least to restrict them to certain geographical areas and to reduce such flows throughout the world.

/...

74. With regard to the links between refugee problems and cases of statelessness (A/47/12, para. 18), his delegation considered that such cases should be averted. A mechanism should be established to coordinate the humanitarian organizations' programmes and the international community's efforts to find a political solution to conflicts. Preventive measures in that sphere could be based on flexible mechanisms that would serve as a check and would have a humanitarian effect in conflict situations through reliable early warning.

75. The problems faced both by refugees and by the host countries, such as difficulties in adjusting to a new situation, language or cultural barriers, manifestations of racism or xenophobia in everyday life, delinquency and other problems, called for coordinated efforts by the humanitarian organizations and the other organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and regional organizations; such coordination should be a permanent feature and should not be confined merely to exchanges of views.

76. At the moment there was not a single staff member of UNHCR from the Russian Federation. Such was not his country's objective per se, but it needed qualified specialists who would be in a position to put the experience gained from work with UNHCR into practical effect on their return. Practice showed that no one knew more about actual conditions in a place than someone who had been born there. His delegation hoped that the Office appreciated that situation and the practical needs of the Russian Federation.

77. Mr. SUKAYRI (Jordan) said that discussions on the new international humanitarian order had been useful and constructive and had contributed to the search for durable solutions to ever-increasing humanitarian problems in all parts of the world. The growth of those problems called for a stronger response on the part of the international community; greater political will, more substantial financial resources and innovative solutions were needed to address that difficult task.

78. Policies, strategies and actions had little value if they failed to promote human welfare, a primary concern of his delegation. Draft resolution A/C.3/47/L.37, which his delegation was submitting to the Committee at the current session, was a synthesis of previous resolutions adopted by the General Assembly without a vote. In the first place, it was important to have a broad framework within which to discuss and consider various options for action in respect of humanitarian problems which the international community might have neglected or inadequately addressed. The variety of subjects to which delegations had referred and the different resolutions adopted previously were proof of the merits of what might be termed an "umbrella item". His delegation believed that the item should be maintained and should be given greater attention.

79. His delegation wished, furthermore, to convey its gratitude to UNHCR and its appreciation for the work of the Independent Bureau for Humanitarian

(Mr. Sukayri, Jordan)

Issues which, as a follow-up mechanism of the Independent Commission, had continued the work of research, reflection and dissemination, despite financial difficulties. Its efforts had resulted in the publication of some 60 reports in various languages on subjects ranging from desertification and street children to norms of international humanitarian law, and a series of television documentaries had been prepared for third-world networks.

80. His delegation also wished to point out that the draft resolution had no budgetary implications and imposed no obligations of any kind on Member States. The draft resolution constituted a merger of General Assembly resolutions 45/101 and 45/102, relating to the humanitarian order and to international cooperation in the humanitarian field, and expressed its deep appreciation to the delegation of the Russian Federation and the other sponsors for their cooperation and assistance in merging the two resolutions into a single document.

81. His delegation was convinced that it was only through a humanitarian approach and a humane attitude that contemporary crises could be resolved, since no humanitarian principles or legal norms could be useful if they were not properly implemented. At the same time, he trusted that collective efforts in the Committee and at the World Conference on Human Rights would lead to concrete action in the humanitarian field.

82. Mr. HASSENI (Algeria) said that the fact that there were 18 million refugees demonstrated the increasingly international scale of the problem. The need to address the question of massive population movements was particularly critical since the relevant international instruments, the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, did not cover the new categories of persons seeking asylum or refuge. It was with that in mind that the report of UNHCR dwelt on the need for new approaches and new tools to guarantee the protection of refugees, who were no longer fleeing only persecution but also desperate political, economic and environmental conditions.

83. The third-world countries had the highest concentration of refugees in the world, and in most of them the infrastructure was inadequate even for their own inhabitants. The refugee burden was consequently a difficult one for them to bear.

84. According to the report of the Secretary-General on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa (A/47/529), the refugee problem on that continent, where approximately half of the world's refugees were situated, exceeded the capacity of UNHCR and called for a concerted approach by the United Nations system and the international community.

85. He noted with satisfaction the establishment of the mechanisms provided for under General Assembly resolution 46/182 and the recent initiatives on behalf of Somalia and the countries of southern Africa affected by the drought. It was also gratifying to note the complete implementation of the

/...

(Mr. Hasseni, Algeria)

provisions of that resolution concerning the principle of respect for the sovereignty of the beneficiary State and the need to have its prior consent for the provision of humanitarian assistance.

86. Such assistance, however necessary it might be, was but the most urgent aspect of the problem. The international community must tackle the profound causes of population exoduses, which to a large extent, were the result of extreme poverty, want and hunger, which, in turn, were subject to macroeconomic factors such as deterioration of the terms of trade, debt burden and the effects of structural adjustment.

87. Algeria assumed its responsibilities with regard to receiving, housing and assisting refugees, particularly Saharans. In view of the delay in the timetable for holding the referendum in Western Sahara, the needs of those refugees were still great. In that regard, he drew attention to the assessment made by the High Commissioner, who had underscored the need to give greater attention to certain areas such as health, nutrition, housing and transport.

88. Ms. SIMONE (Armenia) said that her country was greatly concerned about the problem of refugees, whose numbers had increased to over 18 million. For the first time since the Second World War, there were over 3 million refugees and displaced persons in Europe as a result of the abhorrent practice of "ethnic cleansing" in the former Yugoslavia.

89. Armenia understood only too well the refugee problem because, since 1988, it had had to absorb 350,000 persons that had fled from Azerbaijan as a result of serious human rights violations and the conflict in Nagorny Karabakh. In addition to that crisis, 500,000 Armenians had been displaced as a result of the devastating earthquake in 1988.

90. The refugee problem was a top priority for her Government. However, owing to the blockades imposed by Azerbaijan on Armenia, assistance had been diverted. Despite the ensuing difficulties for the population and, particularly, the refugees, her Government was focusing its attention on the resettlement of refugees and displaced persons.

91. Armenia supported a multifaceted and integrated approach. She welcomed the close cooperation between UNHCR and other relevant United Nations agencies in the former Yugoslavia and the Horn of Africa. UNDP, UNICEF and other development agencies could facilitate the Office's activities.

92. Armenia fully supported the preventive efforts of UNHCR. Increasing humanitarian assistance in vulnerable areas and strengthening human rights mechanisms would help improve the conditions that led to movements of people. She also welcomed the progress in enhancing the Office's capacity to respond to emergency situations and the possibility of resolving many refugee situations through voluntary repatriation.

/...

93. Mr. HASSANOV (Azerbaijan) said that the magnitude and gravity of the refugee problem required greater support for the commendable work of UNHCR and focusing attention on assistance of a purely humanitarian and non-political nature. The establishment of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs had undoubtedly enhanced the effectiveness of the Organization's work to solve the serious problems confronting the international community in view of the instability caused by the great changes in recent years, which, in turn, had led to unprecedented migration flows threatening world peace and security.

94. The international community must analyse the causes of those emergency situations, deal with them and attempt to prevent their occurence. The refugee problem was usually associated with foreign aggression and occupation, military conflict, territorial claims and questions related to the redrawing of frontiers. It was the duty of the international community to eliminate those causes; and since humanitarian assistance alone would not suffice in order to solve those problems, there would be a need for greater coordination among the humanitarian agencies and political bodies.

95. Unfortunately, the democratic transformation of the former Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern and Central Europe had not strengthened peace in that vast area but rather, on the contrary, the leaders of some countries, pursuing pernicious designs, had violated the territorial rights of other countries in order to satisfy their own ambitions. Today, those peoples were the victims once again of the crime of genocide, in the case in question under the name of "ethnic cleansing". Azerbaijan agreed with the statement by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights concerning the situation in the former Yugoslavia that "ethnic cleansing does not appear to be the consequence of the war, but rather its goal" (A/47/635, para. 6).

96. Regrettably, that phrase applied not only to Yugoslavia; and the international community had still not reacted with the necessary speed required also by other long-standing conflicts. In the case of the territories of the former Soviet Union, perhaps the international community still considered that it was a question of internal problems.

97. There were more than one million refugees and displaced persons between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, of whom almost half a million were situated in Azerbaijan as a result of the military conflict with Armenia and the occupation of a large part of the territory of Azerbaijan. Although much had been said about the way to settle the conflict, Azerbaijan, since it had no territorial claims, was focusing its efforts on achieving a single objective, namely, the liberation of its occupied territories in order to guarantee the peaceful coexistence of two neighbouring States and the return of the refugees to their homes.

98. The situation in the region necessarily affected the economy as well as the social and moral conditions of society. Although the assistance of international agencies could help alleviate the difficulties caused by those problems, Azerbaijan was not accustomed to living solely on the basis of

(Mr. Hassanov, Azerbaijan)

well-intentioned foreign assistance since it was a country of great economic potential which could, in spite of the difficult transition that it was experiencing, guarantee means of subsistence for the refugee victims of the conflict and the inhuman policy of ethnic cleansing. Nevertheless, in view of its lack of experience in that field, Azerbaijan was forced to request aid from international agencies in the form of humanitarian assistance. In that connection, he drew attention to the recent visit to Azerbaijan by a group of United Nations experts to evaluate the situation and determine the best way of providing concrete assistance to the refugees and displaced persons and coordinate cooperation by UNHCR and other United Nations bodies in that and other important fields.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.